



# Heidegger in the Arab Context: Fathi Meskini

By

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## **Abstract**

During the last two decades of the twentieth century, Heidegger was re-introduced to the Arabic world; however, while, originally, he had been presented as just another existentialist philosopher, this re-introduction saw him viewed quite differently by contemporary Arabic thinkers. In this thesis, I examine the impact of Heidegger on one such thinker, Fathi Meskini. He argues that Heidegger is less important for his treatment of existential issues than for his critique of hermeneutic reason, which helps reveal the history of metaphysics. In my treatment of Meskini's appropriation of Heidegger into Arabic thinking, I first discuss the problem of the language of Being, and Meskini's attempt to deconstruct philosophical Islamic tradition, from the moment when Aristotle's thinking was indigenised in the Arabic context. This Islamic tradition thought about the problem of being and expressed it in its own language. It is this tradition that constituted the basis of all Arabic reason throughout the twentieth century. Since the meaning of Being is accessed through the hermeneutics of the human being, I then go on to consider the way Meskini uses Heidegger's hermeneutic distinction between what-questioning, and who-questioning as a means to critique what Meskini called 'identical reason'. This mode of reason is still dominant in the Arabic sphere, in the thinking of both modernists and traditionalists. Meskini raises the question of how who-questioning can establish the meaning of belongingness, beyond the conflict between the self and other so as to achieve what he calls the 'new enlightenment of the last Muslim'.

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Our teachers are not just public professors, though we badly need professors. Our teachers, once we reach adulthood, are those who bring us something radical and new, who know how to invent an artistic or literary technique, finding those ways of thinking that correspond to our modernity, that is, our difficulties as well as our vague enthusiasms.

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## Introduction

Fathi Meskini is an Arab hermeneutical philosopher who has contributed to introducing Heidegger's philosophy to Arabic culture. He has done this, not just by translating and interpreting Heidegger's works, such as *Being and Time*, but also by using a number of Heidegger's thoughts in his critique of what is called 'Arabic reason', that is, the hidden structure of this culture. According to Meskini, Heidegger established the foundations of a kind of 'critique of hermeneutical reason', which is perfectly suited to helping the Arabic culture pose questions about its own interpretive problems.

The aim of the present study is to explore the ways in which Heidegger's theses have had a profound effect on Meskini's thinking, and to show how he applies this thinking to the present-day Arabic context, particularly in relation to its theology and identity, and the relationship of the Arab world with modernity.

In the first chapter, I explore the problematic of Being, in the Arab context. This is prefaced by an investigation of the nature of this problematic, that is, the type of difficulties encountered by those who, over the past decades, have attempted to translate *Being and Time*. In the chapter itself, I firstly discuss how, in view of this problematic, Meskini felt it necessary to review the Arab philosophical tradition, beginning with the era when the first Arab philosophers sought to indigeneise the philosophy of the ancient Greeks, especially that of Aristotle. In doing this, I highlight Meskini's research concerning early Arabic translations of the Greek terms, τὸ ὄν and εἶναι, which appeared in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, and, then, show how these terms were used in the writings of one of the first Arab philosophers, Al-Kindi. Secondly, I explore Meskini's attempt to liberate, what he called, the language of Being, from its ontotheological basis. This new way of thinking

paves the way for Meskini's fundamental re-examination of human issues in the Arab space, which is explored in Chapters 2 and 3.

The second chapter explores the Arabic concept of *Huwiyya*, which to the early Arabic philosophers meant 'Being', but which later came to signify human identity. The preface discusses Meskini's historicisation of this turn, as the result of the shock of Modernity on Arab culture, and his belief that the essence of the human being, in the Arabic context, has not been subjected to the right form of questioning. This is followed by a discussion of how he was subsequently influenced by Heidegger's notion of two distinct types of questioning: the what-question and the who-question. The latter, which relates to the real human essence, evokes the response 'We', whereas the former is related to any entity, except the human one. Finally, I examine the way in which Meskini is influenced by Heidegger's thinking concerning the relationship between Man and the Homeland: whether there is an existential and essential value of the homeland for the human being. The discussion of both of these issues prepares the ground for examining the problem of the We, which only belongs to the Arab context, and which is the subject of Chapter 3.

In the final chapter, I investigate Meskini's hermeneutics concerning the problem of 'We'. Firstly, I deal with Meskini's critique of the problem of identity that has dominated Arabic thinking since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This critique, which is dependent on Heidegger's concept of Time, moves beyond the meaning of 'We', as espoused both by traditionalists and modernists, to a new horizon, that of alternative modernity. Although this critique was only one of many attempts, by Meskini, to bring enlightenment to Arabic reason, it is unique in that it depends on what he terms 'hermeneutic reason', an idea adopted from Heidegger's history of Being.

In the conclusion to the thesis, I sum up the relationship between Heidegger's thinking and Meskini's hermeneutics, and how the latter tries to achieve the New Enlightenment in the Arabic



context, through what has been known, in the West, since the sixth decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as the Linguistic Turn (Rorty). I highlight Meskini's belief that Arab reason is, *a priori*, equipped for this kind of Turn, and that if Arabs consider themselves a "nation" of language, a culture of speech or a civilization of "the Book", then, their thinking, in all fields, comes from an earlier, special version of the linguistic Turn. According to Meskini, this reasoning elevates the Word to the rank of Being, the metaphysical effect of which is expressed in The Mu'allaqāt (The Suspended Odes or The Hanging Poems), and later, in the Qur'an, where it becomes distorted as it passes through Syntax, theology and fiqh (Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence).

# First Chapter: Problems in translating Heidegger's *Being and Time*

## I. Preface

In the Arabic context, there is a belief that some philosophical texts are impossible to translate, with Heidegger's *Being and Time* at the top of the list. Many of those in the Arab world who were interested in Heidegger's philosophy wondered if it were at all possible to translate his works into Arabic, especially in view of the fact that many such attempts remained incomplete. These included those by Abdul Rahman Badawi, Abdul Ghaffar Makkawi and George Zinati<sup>1</sup>.

While this doubt is, at times, only hinted at very subtly, as is the case with Makkawi, in a lengthy introduction to his translation of Heidegger's book, *On the Way to Truth*<sup>2</sup>, at other times, it is very clearly voiced by a number of thinkers in the philosophical field. For example, Mahjoub clearly states that a translator, however skilful they may be, cannot reduce the distance between Heidegger and Arabic thinking. Mahjoub concludes that the problem is a linguistic one: the concept of Being, as elaborated by Heidegger, is difficult to convey in a language such as Arabic, which is rooted in the past; in fact, he believes that synchronisation of the concept of Being, in both the language of Heidegger and Arabic, is impossible<sup>3</sup>.

Mahjoub takes pains to point out that the issues raised by Heidegger were the product of a contemporary European context, which, itself, had evolved over time through the work of the great European philosophers. Therefore, the thought processes that culminated with Heidegger's thesis

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/culture/2016/12/28/> accessed at 4/09/2019.

<sup>2</sup> Abdul Ghaffar Makkawi, *Nida Al-Haqeqa*, Appeal of Truth, (Cairo: Maktbat Al-Usra, 2010), p. 48.

<sup>3</sup> Mohammed. Mahjoub, *Heidegger wa Moshkil Al-Metafezeqa*, Heidegger and problem of Metaphysics, (Tunis: Dar Al-Janoob, 1995), p. 23.

on Being, were quite different from those of the contemporary Arab world. Maybe this is what Heidegger was referring to when he said:

Some time ago, I called language, clumsily enough, the house of Being. If man, by virtue of his language, dwells within the claim and call of Being, then we Europeans presumably dwell in an entirely different house than Eurasian man. And so, a dialogue from house to house remains nearly impossible.<sup>1</sup>

A hint at a possible solution to this problem, in terms of exactly what is required to achieve this “dialogue” in translation, is suggested by Moussa Wehbe, who, it should be noted, one of those who made an incomplete attempt at translating *Being and Time*<sup>2</sup>:

If I had the adeptness and skilfulness of Mohammed Abed al-Jabri<sup>3</sup>, I would talk about the formation and construction of Arab reason, and I would say: There is, in Arab reason, a natural tendency to speak the philosophical language of Heidegger, but this reason lacks critique about how it must be spoken.<sup>4</sup>

Despite doubts, *Being and Time* has been successfully translated into languages other than the Indo-European tongues; this includes ones such as Japanese, in 1940, and Chinese, at the end of the 1980s. Hence, Meskini, in his work, has adopted the idea of the existence of multiple Houses of Being, which then allows for the translation and elaboration of Heidegger’s theses, within an

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Heidegger, *On the way to language*, trans., P. D. Hertz, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982), p.5.

<sup>2</sup> *Translating Heidegger's Sein und Zeit*, a work that lists all the translations of Heidegger’s *Being and Time* in the world, notes that there are two translations into Arabic still in the preparatory phase: one by Moussa Wehbe and another by Mahjoub (Note that this work was published in 2005). Neither of these translations has yet been made public. Cristian Ciocan (ed.), *Translating Heidegger's Sein und Zeit* (Studia Phaenomenologica vol. V, 2005, p.19.

<sup>3</sup> Mohammed Abed al-Jabri (1935-2010) launched the broad project called *Critique of Arab Reason* subdivided into four books (The Development of Arab Reason, 1984, The Structure of Arab Reason, 1986, Arab Political Reason, 1990, Arab Ethical Reason, 2001. This work represents one of the most complete attempts at an epistemological investigation of Arab and Islamic philosophy’s historical-theoretical evolution in its various articulations (methodological, theological, political, ethical, etc.).

<sup>4</sup> Musa Wahba et al., *Al-Istighrab, ‘Occidentalism’*, Islamic Centre for Strategic Studies, Vol. 5, no.2, 2016, p. 265.

Arabic context. In contrast to Mahjoub, Meskini believes that the distance separating Arabic thinking from Heidegger's ideas is not as wide as the one between the Chinese language and Heidegger's German. It has been proposed that this is due to the fact that Chinese culture has no history of a monotheistic religion. According to the Chinese translator, this is problematic, because Heidegger's lexicon was derived both from a monotheistic religion and from protests against it. Moreover, Meskini states that apart from monotheism, there is another very close link between the Heideggerian and Arabic philosophies: Greek was the ontological source of both<sup>1</sup>.

Despite the belief that the distance separating Heidegger's philosophical lexicon from Arabic is not wide, the task of translating Heidegger's thesis, *Being and Time*, remains a difficult one. This is due, in no small measure, to the fact that such a translation involves extending the local language to encompass a universal concept such as Being, a process that radically challenges Arabic linguistic heritage.

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<sup>1</sup> Fathi Meskini, *Al-Tafkir ba'd Heidegger aw Kafe Al-Khroj mn Al-Asr Al-Tawely lilaqel*, Thinking Post Heidegger or How to go forth from the hermeneutical age of reason, (Beirut: Jadawel 2012), p. 31.

## II: Understanding the linguistic difficulties of Arabic

If one reads Heidegger's texts in Arabic, or writings about his philosophy, common terms that correspond to the German term 'Sein' ('Being') can be found; one of these, 'Wujūd', is used by the majority of scholars who specialise in Heideggerian thought.

'Wujūd' (noun) is the common ontological term that had been used as the exact equivalent of 'Einai' ('εἶναι') from the time of Al-Farabi until the twentieth century, and one which is typically translated in English as, 'Being', 'existence', 'presence', or 'entity'. For example, Badawi and other Arab existentialists have used 'wujūd' as the equivalent of 'Being', in general, as well as to express 'Existence'<sup>1</sup>.

In the period before his translation appeared, Meskini addressed the problematic elements of Islamic ontology, as a whole. In addition, he also exposed the issues that have been related to the structure of its language since philosophy first appeared in the so-called Islamic era, which stretched from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. He says:

Every time, we restore our minds to the primordial meaning-generating moment. Since there is no way to break free from self-perception in so far as we become liberated from the ideals upon which that perception is based, the maximum liberation would be the liberation of a level we stand on: Language. That level is an invisible horizon which constitutes our self-meaning<sup>2</sup>.

In this sense, he maintains that the translation/interpretation does not harbour foreign values, but restores something of the lost meaning of ourselves as universal human beings, which was

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<sup>1</sup> Abdel Rahman Badawi, *Al-Zaman Al-Wujudi*, Existential time, (Beirut: House of Culture, 1973).

<sup>2</sup> Meskini, *Al-Tafkir ba'd Heidegger*, p.11.

expressed in another language, and that this latent potential of Arabic, which no doubt every language possesses, is only realised through translation from other languages.

The core of the problem with the Arabic language is that it does not use the copula between the subject and predicate, at least in the present tense, to express a true grammatical or logical sentence as in English:

For example, in English: The sky *is* blue

The same example in Arabic reads as: السماء زرقاء (alsma ...zarka)

This latter consists of just the noun and adjective, or subject and predicate.

Therefore, in Arabic, the verb 'wajad' from 'wujūd' does not function in the same way as 'Sein' (German), 'to be' (English), or 'einai' [εἶναι] (Greek).

It is obvious from these examples, that any discussion in the Arabic language of Heidegger's concept of Being, is going to be problematic. It is inevitable that translators will be obliged to make vague approximations when dealing with Heidegger's formal structure of the question of Being, even though in the Indo-European languages, the explanation is crystal clear. This is explained by Heidegger who says:

What is "Being"? We keep within an understanding of the 'is', though we are unable to fix conceptually what that 'is' signifies<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans., J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson, (USA: Blackwell, 1962), p 25.

While it appears that the question concerning the essence of Being is a question like any other, Heidegger insists that it is quite different from any other question or way of accessing the meaning of Being.

Meskini indicates that this attempt by Heidegger to explain the question of Being poses problems for Islamic ontology, because its linguistic terminology was conceived in the period from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, if translators do not accept that the task is one of indigenising Heidegger's thought, by expanding the linguistic horizons of Arabic, the translation will become merely a transfer of words, rather than ideas.

In approaching this undertaking, it is important to return to the confluence of Greek thought, especially that of Aristotle, and the Arabic-Islamic Age, as many researchers argue that Heidegger's search for the meaning of Being was rooted in Aristotle.<sup>1</sup>

Firstly, it is necessary to examine Islamic ontology. However, this will be done through the philosophy of the Islamic era, rather than Islamic scholastic theology, despite the fact that the latter preceded the former. The issue, then, is how Arab philosophers managed to indigenise Greek concepts, specifically those of Aristotle.

Al-Farabi examined the method of generating equivalent concepts, in the Arabic tongue, of Greek forms of address. He also discussed the problem of the absence, in the Arabic language, of the copula, in contrast to other languages, such as Greek and Persian, and emphasised the importance of this in metaphysics, as well as logic:

Since its codification, Arabic has no word which gives the meaning of the Persian "HST" or the Greek "Esti." Neither does it have its equivalents in other languages. The word was

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Sheehan, *Heidegger: The man and the Thinker*, (Chicago: Precedent, 1981), p 5.

proven necessary in theoretical sciences and logic. Since the transmission of philosophy into the Arab [world], Arab-speaking philosophers have felt the need to do philosophy and logic in their mother-tongue. Ever since then, they have found no equivalent in Arabic language since its codification that can convey the contexts in which the Greek "Esti" or the Persian "HST" have been used – an Arabic equivalent that can localise the meaning as used in other languages. Some Arab philosophers chose to use the Arabic equivalent Hwa "HE" in place of the Persian "HST" and Greek "Esti."..... It is a derivative and conjugated word. They put the word "existence" in place of Huwiyya (Heness). And they used the noun – forms of its derivations in the sense of existential wording and put them in place of Kana (Was), Yakoun (is) and Sayakoun (to be). They also use the word Mawjud (That which exists) in both the context of referring to the whole things and the subject-predicate proposition with the aim of leaving Time unmentioned. These two contexts are the ones in which the Persian "HST" and Greek "Esti" were used. They used the Arabic word Wujūd (existence) in a context wherein the Persian HST is used. And they used Wojideh (existed), Youjed (to exist) and Sa youjed (will exist) in places of Kana (Was), Yakoun (is) and Sayakoun (to be), consecutively.<sup>1</sup>

Three terms have been seized upon in Arabic ontology, as equivalents of the Greek 'einai', which expresses the notion of Being:

1. (Ays) الأيس and its opposite (lays) , ليس , that is, 'being' and 'non-being', which were revived in an attempt to find an equivalent for the "copula" in Greek. In Arabic literature, this term is rarely used, especially in the affirmative form. Al-Khalil (801-873) mentioned that when the

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Farabi, *Kitâb al-Hurûf*, Book of Letters, M. Mahdi (ed.), (Beirut: Dar Al-Mashreq, 1986), pp. 112-113.



ancient Arabs said for ‘something’, "Bring thou him, or it, from where he, or it, is, and is not", it literally meant, “Bring something from existence (“ays”), or from nothing (“lays”). Some contemporary scholars confirm that the negative form, the compound, “lys” (is not) was common at this time, and was used as the copula; for example:

Al-Kindi lays hunak

الكندي ليس هناك

(Al-Kindi is not (lys) there)

Therefore, the translator of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* assumed that the affirmative form of “ayes” was tacit, as, in Arabic, some pronouns are, at times. However, it was Uṣṭāth, one of the scholars who translated Aristotle’s work into Arabic, who revived this term, in the philosophical sense, as follows:

|          |                                  |                        |
|----------|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| εστίν    | (Metaph. 1043 b 25 )             | الاييس Al-Ays          |
| εστίν    | (Metaph. 1042 b 26 )             | اييس Ays               |
| τὸ εἶναι | (Metaph. 993 b 31 )              | ايسية Aysia            |
| ἦν εἶναι | ( Metaph. 1010 a 17)             | انه ليس Inho Lys       |
| ἦν εἶναι | (Metaph. 1027 b 29) <sup>1</sup> | أي ليس هو Inho Lys hoa |

<sup>1</sup> Soheil Afnan, *Philosophical Terminology in Arabic and Persian*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill 1964), p 89-97.

Al-Kindi used "ays", broadly, in his metaphysics to express “Being”, and he derived a verb from this form to denote “to bring into being from nothing”. This act was related to First Cause, which referred to "origination" (al-ibda') or “creation”, that is, the manifestation (izhar) of the thing from non-being ('an lays)".

In addition, Al-Kindi derived from "ays" the noun "moayes", مؤيس. This noun is an active participle that refers to an entity, and it enacts the base meaning, that is the general actor, in turn, for another derived noun. The passive participle, مؤيس , is the entity upon which the base meaning is enacted. It corresponds to the object of the verb.

In this sense, there are two types of being: one is related to God, and other, to any entity. It is important to note that "ays" is a term that had fallen into disuse in Arabic. It was mentioned by Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā 980-1037), in his renowned work, *Kitab Al-Shifa (The Book of Healing)*, as a synonym for the Arab word, "wujud", (Being)<sup>1</sup>. Since that time, however, it has not been in common use, as a philosophical term.

2- ‘Inniyya’ انية, one of the terms which appear to have been coined as a copula during the time that Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* was being translated by Uṣṭāth and others, such as Matti and Ishaq:

τὸ εἶναι (Metaph. 1042 b 28) (Uṣṭāth) الانية Al-Inniyya

τὸ μὴ εἶναι (Metaph. 1043 a 1) (Uṣṭāth) لا انية La Inniyya

τὸ εἶναι (Metaph. 1075 b 5) (Matti) انية Inniyya

τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι (Metaph. 1024 b 29) (Uṣṭāth) الانية Al-Inniyya

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<sup>1</sup> Gamil Saleba, *Philosophical Dictionary 1*, (Biuret: Dar Al-Kitab Al-Lebanani, 1982), p. 184.

τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι (Metaph. 1038 b 17) (Uṣṭāth)<sup>1</sup> الانية Al-Inniyaa

Although this term is among the most important terms in the history of Arab ontology, there is ambiguity about its significance, due to its usage by philosophers, as well as the mystery surrounding its origin. In philosophical writings "inniyya" is the term used to express the concept of being as an abstraction. It also connotes the 'thatness' of a thing, in contrast to its 'whatness' (mahiyya) and 'whyness' (limmiyya) , and also refers to the 'fact-that being', or 'unique existence'.

Many origins have been suggested for this term; firstly, there was the hypothesis of a Syriac abstract derivation, then, it was put forward that it is a transcription of εἶναι (or another Greek term), of which "anniyya" is often the translation. There was also the hypothesis of its derivation as a noun, from the particles "inna" or "anna". According to some authors, such as Abu Al-Baqa, the first of these, "in-inna", has an assertive function, so is used to assert the power of being or existence. Therefore, according to Al-Bake, some Arab philosophers derived a noun from it, to refer to the quintessential and necessary existence, that is, Allah/God. This explanation is significant, because it simplifies the often complicated hypotheses of its origin, and also depicts the way in which the term has evolved<sup>2</sup>.

In Arabic grammar, both "inna" and "anna" are termed S Verb-Like Particles, in the sense that they have a verb-like function. The members of this particular group are mostly used as subordinating conjunctions, that is, they connect two clauses. However, there is a crucial difference, in the case of "inna", since it can also be used at the beginning of a sentence, particularly in sentences which

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<sup>1</sup> Afnan, *Philosophical Terminology in Arabic and Persian*, p. 96.a

<sup>2</sup> Abu Al-Baqa Al-Kafawi, *Al-Kolliyat*, A. Darwish and M. Al-Masri (ed.), (Beirut: Al-Resalah Publisher, 1998), p.190.

include subject and predicate. In this case, it is used when there is a need to emphasise the relationship between the subject and predicate.

For example:

الكندي فيلسوف

Al-Kindi is philosopher

V.L.P (inna) - Subject - Predicate

ان الكندي فيلسوف

Inna Al-Kindi philosopher.

So, when "Inna"; is added, the sentence, in English, literally becomes: ***It is true that*** al-Kindi (*is*) a philosopher = Al-Kindi is a philosopher

Therefore, translators of Arabic classical texts, such as the Quran, resorted to "verily" or "indeed", as equivalents of "inna".

In the philosophical context, when Arab translators were trying to find something similar to the copula, they found an equivalent in Arabic semantics, which logically offset the hidden third part of the simple proposition, and which could be used to derive the infinitive. Thus, it is possible to say that "inna" is the equivalent, in its assertive function, of the verb "to be" in the Indo-European languages. For example, the sentence, "Al-Kindi is mortal", asserts that Al-Kindi *is* mortal, just as "Al-Kindi drinks" asserts that Al-Kindi *is* drinking,<sup>1</sup> as attested by the "that is". In contrast, Arabic

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<sup>1</sup> "ESTI [ἐστί], EINAI [εἶναι], B. Cassin (ed.), Dictionary of Untranslatables A Philosophical Lexicon, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press 2014), p.313.

simple (i.e. one-clause) propositions are a compound of two parts: a subject meaning and a predicate meaning.

Therefore, the infinitive, "inniyya", retains the connotation of the assertion, "that it is", in other words, "assertive being". This interpretation of the origin of "inniyya" provides a clue to the usage of this term by Al-Kindi and Al-Farabi (870-951). "Inniyya" has yet another significance, which is evident in Avicenna's usage of it. Here, it referred to "the affirmation of self-existence" or "the constitutive essential factor of self" that was used by Avicenna to differentiate between the existence of the soul, referred to as "I am" (Inniyya), and that which is outside the soul, including the body, which he called "it is"<sup>1</sup>.

Meskini took the original meaning of "inna" and combined it with the notion of the existence of self ("inniyya"), to create the equivalent of what Heidegger termed "Das Selbst" (Selfhood), which is the unity of Dasein in the ways and possibilities of its Being.

3. The term **الهوية** ("Huwyiyia") was used in the translation of Aristotle's "Metaphysics" into Arabic<sup>2</sup>. Of particular note is Ishaq ibn Hunayn's (830-910) translation of a phrase in Chapter 7 Gama "τὸ ὄν ἢ ὅν καὶ τὸ αὐτὸν" ("Being, qua Being or Being as such")<sup>3</sup>, and his derivation of **الهوية** from the word **هو** ("Hwa"). An example of this term is:

Eng: /Socrates is Socrates. Ar: /Socrates (hwa) Socrates.

Although the function of the copula is a matter of predication, it is inserted in the sentence, "Socrates is (hwa) mortal". Then the infinitive ("huwiyya") is derived from the copula, in the same

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<sup>1</sup> Fathi Meskini (trans.), *Al-Kaunona Wa Al-Zaman*, (Appendix of translation Being and Time, Libya: Dar Al-Kitab Al-Jaded 2012), p. 800.

<sup>2</sup> Averroes, 'Long Commentary on the Metaphysics', M. Bouyges (ed.), (Beirut: imprimerie catholique 1952), p. 296.

<sup>3</sup> Averroes, *On Aristotle's Metaphysics*, R. Arnzen (ed), (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2010), p 194. Also : [https://www.loebclassics.com/view/aristotle-metaphysics/1933/pb\\_LCL271.147.xml](https://www.loebclassics.com/view/aristotle-metaphysics/1933/pb_LCL271.147.xml) accessed 12/07/2018

way as "esti" [ἐστί], from "einai" [εἶναι] in Greek. Nevertheless, this term, **الهوية** did not retain its original meaning.

4. The term, **وجود** (wujud ) (einai), has been popularized in philosophical studies to express Aristotle's Being in Arabic. "Mawjod" has also been used as a connector between the subject and predicate, such as in the previous example," Socrates (mawjod) man".

Arab philosophers hesitated when faced with choosing an appropriate term which corresponds to the Greek **τὸ ὄν** until the term "mawjod" became a dominant term in Islamic ontology. Originally, 'mawjod' was the passive voice, and meant "to find oneself there," "to be there." The grammatical noun that corresponds is "wujūd", "the fact of finding," or "the fact of being found"<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Arabic wuğūd, *Dictionary of Untranslatable a Philosophical Lexicon*, p. 1211.

### **III. Concepts of Being (Semantic displacement and reformulations)**

The section does not set out to investigate the concept of Being as presented by all of the Peripatetic philosophers, that is, those who wrote in Arabic, beginning with Al-Kindi, continuing through the period of Al Farabi and Avicenna, up to the time of Ibn Rushed. The reason for this is that, since there is such a diversity of issues and opinions surrounding this particular topic, it would be impossible to discuss them all here. However, what will be discussed in the following section is the way of Being which manifests itself in language, or, in other words, the language which reveals an understanding of the way of Being, at a certain moment in time. This discussion will be a re-working of Meskini's interpretation of the Islamic thinking on Being.

The problematic that occurred, when Aristotle's works were first being translated into Arabic, was partly due to the way in which the Arab philosophers interpreted his idea of Being. However, the main problematic occurred in the thinking that attempted to create a theory of Being, before this theory became the basis of the fundamental texts. Thus, perhaps it is appropriate to discuss, firstly, the work of Al Kindi, in his book, *First Philosophy*, as he was the first philosopher to refer to metaphysics. This work contributed to the formulation of Arab philosophical thinking. In addition, it should be noted that while in his book, al-Kindi used all of the aforementioned terms related to the concept of Being in the original sense, sometimes, he gave them new meanings. Therefore, his work heralded the next wave of shifts that were to occur.

In his work, Al-Kindi firstly divided human perceptions ("wujud") into two types, each of which corresponds to a different kind of perception, and to a specific theme. The first is the perception that is closer to humans and further from nature, one that involves contact between the senses and

the sensible object<sup>1</sup>. This is the perception of the particular that occurs instantaneously, when the human senses make contact with the perceived object. Thus, it does not require effort on the part of the perceiver, but it does lack stability, because the sensible object is in a constant state of flux through the effects of motion. This type of perception simply recognises the existence of objects, without categorising them. The second is intellectual perception, which is related to the way in which the human intellect perceives things that do not fall under the perception of the senses. This is the perception of the universal, one which is constant since it transcends the changing nature of perceptions by the senses. The first perception, because it is related to natural objects, is the domain of physics, which is concerned with natural cause-and-effect relations, whereas the second comes under metaphysics, which deals with the first cause, because, according to Al Kindi,

[we] do not find the truth we are seeking without finding a cause; the cause of the existence and continuance of everything is the True One, in that each thing which has Being has truth. The True One exists necessarily, and therefore beings exist.<sup>2</sup>

However, knowing the cause may be necessary in order to gain an understanding of the basis of these affirmable beings since, according to Al Kindi's metaphysics, there is no knowledge of something without its reason. Thus, he identifies four essential inquiries in metaphysics:

- the question by "whether" ("*hal*"); this is an investigation of being ("*inniyya*"), in the sense of asking if something exists or not.

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Kindi, *On First Philosophy*, trans., A. L. Ivry, (Albany: State University of New York press, 1974), pp. 61-62. Also : Al-Kindi, *Al-Kindi, Rasa'il al-Kindi al-Falsafiyya*, M. Abu Rida. (ed.), (Cairo: Dar al-Fikr Al-Arabi, 1950), pp.106-107.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Kindi, *On First Philosophy*, p. 55.



- the question of “what” (“*ma*”), which is an investigation of the genus of every existent (“*inniyya*”) which has a genus.
- the question of “which” (“*ay*”) that investigates the specific difference of every existent, and, that together with “what”, investigates the species of each existent.
- The question of “why” which is an investigation of the final or absolute cause. The first of these enquiries establishes the existence, or not, of something, whereas the other inquiries seek to identify the nature of this existence<sup>1</sup>. The plural form of “*inniyya*” (“being”,) was used initially by Al-Kindi, to refer to the presence of the multiple entities faced by Man, and, later, to investigate the nature of the being of every object. In view of this, it is possible to say that Al-Kindi moved from enquiring about the existence of concrete things with multiple entities, to identifying the substantial nature of every one of these entities. Therefore, when faced with the question of whether or not the world is eternal, Al-Kindi proved that it is, in fact, a finite world. This argument was based upon his observation that all bodies are finite, where “body” was defined by him as a substance which has length, width and depth, that is, it is three-dimensional. The substance is the body’s genus, and its length, width and depth constitute its specific difference; in other words, a “body” is that which is composed of matter and form. Composition is the change of the form of a body. Thus, because it involves change, composition is motion.

This definition led to the primary premise of Al-Kindi that, above all, bodies are limited in quantity by reason of their having three dimensions. Because bodies are limited by their dimensions, they are also spatially finite. Furthermore, because time is a quantity, being a measure of the duration

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 56.

of change, therefore, since a body is limited in quantity, it is also limited in time, that is, it is finite. Hence, it follows that the body of the universe is finite, both temporally and spatially. In stating this, Al-Kindi provides an understanding of the entity as finite, but it is not clear whether or not he is equating the concept of “inniyya” with the concept of the Aristotelian substances. However, one thing that *is* clear is Al-Kindi’s assertion that the world, in its substance, is finite, and that there is no time beyond the universe, in the sense of eternal matter. It is these assertions that form the basis of his arguments that all beings are limited, which he uses to preface his discussion of the true cause of beings.

Al-Kindi then poses the question of whether or not it is possible for a thing to be the cause of the generation of its own essence. In *The Third Art*, where Al-Kindi discusses the subject of cause, he uses another term, “ayes” (existence), which is also an alternative term for “Being”. In the following argument, Al-Kindi defends his definition of the essence of a thing, as follows:

[...] “essential” is that which establishes the essence of a thing, namely, that by the existence of which the being of a thing is sustained and maintained, and by the absence of which the destruction and corruption of a thing occurs: as “life”, by which the sustenance and maintenance of a living being occurs, and by the absence of which the corruption and destruction of a living being occurs.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, Al-Kindi begins by arguing that if a thing is a “lys” (non-being), and its essence is also “lys”, then, both it and its essence are nothing, and since nothing is neither a cause nor an effect, then it is not possible for something to be the cause of its own existence. The other possibility is when a thing is a non-being and its essence is being, “ays”. In this case, it would also be impossible for

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 78.

the thing to be the cause of its own essence, because that would mean that it was different from its essence, or, in other words, it and its essence were two different things, whereas, in fact, the essence of everything is itself. Using similar reasoning, Al-Kindi went on to contradict other possible arguments as to how a thing could be the cause of itself. Using this reasoning, Al-Kindi concluded that the thing, in its essence, is "coming-to-be of being" ("ays") from "non-being" ("lys"), through the act of "true being" ("inniyya"), which is "bringing-to-be" ("ta'yis"). Al-Kindi thus provides an ontological thesis arguing that God rather than being Aristotle's "efficient cause of Being", is just a final cause of motion.

It is generally accepted that there are two ways of expressing the conception of Being. The first of these is by the term, "ays", which represents the first bearer of predications and features, both of which are vulnerable to corruption. Ays, itself, does not change even if these essential predications are removed, because even without them, being still remains, in the same way that when a life is removed from an animal, there is still pure existence. In this way, the term "ays" is analogous to Aristotle's "matter". However, it differs from Al-Kindi's concept of Being. According to him, Being is finite, and as time is a predicate of Being ("Ays"), time is also limited. Thus,

[...] the being of a body does not have infinity; the being of a body is, rather, finite, and it is impossible for a body to be eternal.<sup>1</sup>

Unlike the first conception of Being, the second is of an unlimited Being, distinguished by having neither matter, genus, species nor any essential predicate which can be removed or corrupted. Because all of these attributes can distinguish it from the first conception in the same way that a life can be distinguished from human being, the first is a conception of Being with multiplicity. After systematically showing that every kind of predicate is incompatible with the divine unity, he concludes:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid, p. 75.

Therefore [God] The true one is only and purely unity (wahda faqat mahd), I mean nothing other than unity.<sup>1</sup>

This conception is opposed to Aristotle's metaphysics concerning the matter of the world, but it does approach Islamic theology, especially *Mu'tazila's* theory of creation that is based on the idea that God is the first efficient cause, and creator of things from nothing. Moreover, according to this theory, the world is brought into existence from a state of non-existence, and both this existence and its duration are still dependent on the will of the First Cause.

In the context of Arabic linguistics, Al-Kindi was the first to add the formula of the passive participle and active participle to the ontology of the Arabic lexicon, in order to express the ontological difference between passive beings (possible existent) and efficient beings (the necessary existent). In addition, he formulated the verb to describe the act of existing, in the sense of an objects' coming-into-being that is caused by the First Being. In the Arabic language, since words can be derived from other words to express new meanings, Al-Kindi derived the terms, "tahawy", and "motahawa" from "hawiyya", and "moayes" and "tayes" from "ays" .

In Al-Kindi's text *First Philosophy*, can be found a usage of the term "wujud", which is interesting, because it implies that he used it in its original sense. This word originally expressed the idea of a human being in a state of knowledge. Hence, "mawjud" ("existent") was used to refer to the thing that received the act of knowledge as it was perceived, rather than simply the fact "that it is". So, when he wanted to point to its being, that is, that which is characterised by concreteness and sheer givenness, he used "inniyya" ("Being"). This is an infinitive derived from "inna" ("that it is"), the answer to the question, "Is something there?"

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Kindi, *Al-Kindi, Rasa'il al-Kindi al-Falsafiyya*. p.160.

Many terms are derived from “wujud”, and all have human significance, such as “wjd”, that refers to the emotional dimension (feelings) and to mystic ecstasy, in the sense in which it was used by Schilling when he reawakened, in modern philosophy, the ecstatic dimension of existence<sup>1</sup>.

Meskini invests “wujud” with its original meaning, one which reflects its human dimension, and which had been displaced and then obliterated by theological interpretation. In adopting this usage, he equates the meaning of “wujud” with that of “existence”, as formulated by Heidegger in his work, *Being and Time*. Heidegger’s existence is characterised by its understanding of itself, and its main issue is questioning its own existence. Thus, only those exist who can stand outside themselves<sup>2</sup>.

There remains one essential question: Is it possible to find an Arabic equivalent of the Greek concept that refers to the neutral being? At first, this term referred to “that it is” (“Seiend”) and then, later it meant “Being” (“Sein”), as Meskini worked to uncover the language versions that were used in pre-philosophical times, in order to re-interpret them.

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<sup>1</sup> Meskini, *Al-Tafkir ba’d Heidegger*, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 45.

#### IV. To Liberate Concepts of Being (Meskini)

In more modern times, Meskini reintroduced to contemporary Arabic the term "kaunona" (كينونة) ("Being"), the equivalent of the term German "Sein", and the Greek "Einai", which besides having been barely used in Islamic philosophy up until that point, had also been used in a different sense. For him, this was not an idiomatic option, but a Hermeneutic task, necessitated by the special nature of the question of Being as formulated by Heidegger in his work, *Being and Time*, as well in later Heidegger.

"Kaunona" is the Arabic noun (verbal noun) derived from the verb كان ("kan"), just as, in German, "Sein" comes from the verb "sein". This verb, more than any other in Arabic, is the source of much semantic confusion. The ambiguity also extends to the various grammatical forms that are derived from the verb. This problem can perhaps be explained in terms of the structure of the Arabic language: Arabic is an inflected language, that is, one that relies on prefixes, suffixes, infixes, or other internal modifications, to determine meaning. In addition, Arabic employs diacritics which indicate the short vowels. These can be added to a word, without changing its structure, in order to give it a new meaning. This explains why there is a lot of ambiguity in the way in which "kan" and its derivatives are interpreted.

However, there are still further complications: besides "kaunona", there are other nouns derived from "kan" that have quite different meanings. For instance, كَوْن ("kaun"), and كَوْن ("kaun"), which have the same phonetic pronunciation and written form, but have different meanings that can only be conveyed through context. The first means "cosmos", or "universe", while the second, most probably, "Being", as an entity, or "facticity of Being".

In order to fully understand the meaning of "kan" and its derivative, "kaunona", it is necessary to go back to early Arabic thinking about language, which resulted in the formulation of Arabic grammar and lexicon. This point in time is especially significant, because it is related to the Sacred as well as being a precursor of philosophical thinking in later centuries. It is this tradition of unquestioning acceptance of grammatical dogma that Heidegger wishes to lay open to question. He believes that such 'destruction' of the history of grammar entails the 'destruction' of metaphysics, and so enables a revival of the question of Being<sup>1</sup>.

In point of fact, Meskini begins his reflection on the specifics of the grammar and semantics of كان ("kan"), and its etymological derivations, by providing ontological inventories, and thereby reviving, at the same time, the question of Being in the Arabic world.

In order to measure the semantic peculiarity of the verb "kan", its received meanings, as listed in classical lexicons of the time, must be examined. "Kan" in the sense of حَدَثَ "hadath" means "occurred" or "happened", as in the past tense of a verb. To clarify the meaning of "kan", the following simplified example is given<sup>2</sup>:

كانت هناك مشاكل كافية خلال الاسابيع الماضية / *kanat hunak mashakel kafia khlaal al alsabee almathia* : "There has been enough trouble over the last few weeks". Where "kan"= "has been". Of course, in this example, and according to the rules of English grammar, "has been" refers to something that has happened. In contrast, in Arabic, the verb "kan" only refers to the past, in general, so the particular meaning "occurred" is evident only from the context. The following

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<sup>1</sup> R. Polt, and G. Fried (ed.), *Companion to Heidegger's Introduction to Metaphysics*, (London: Yale University Press, 2001), p.127.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Manzur, *Lisân al-'Arab*, Tongue of Arabs, 13, (Lebanon, Beirut: Dar AL SADER), p. 136-137 , see also I. al-Jawhari, *al-Sihah fi al-Lugha* [The Correct Language],

sentence provides a simple illustration of this linguistic feature of Arabic: "There was an incident at the power plant on Monday night". Here, "kan"="was".

Further evidence of the meaning of "kan" as "occurred" is provided by the link between "kan"("was/were") and another verb كَوَّنَ ("kwan"), which means "frame", "give definite shape to" or "formulate". This, in a broad sense, is the same as "bring into being", and hence, "occurrence", in the theological sense. Linguists illustrate this with the following example: لا كان ولا تكون ("la kan wla tkawan")<sup>1</sup>. This literally means: "It was not and it did not occur".

In fact, these two verbs have very different etymological and grammatical functions, and, hence, different meanings.

The following table serves to clarify this:

| Past/meaning<br>En.                           | Present /meaning<br>En.                   | Future/ meaning<br>En.                               | Infinitives (nouns ) / Eng  |
|---|---|--|---|
| كان ( kan)<br>Was /Were                       | يكون yakon<br>Can be                      | سيكون (Sayakon)<br>Will be                           | الكينونة ( Kaynona ) ,<br>كان ( kaan ) ,<br>كون ( kaown )<br>Being , entity , to be |
| تكوَّنَ (tkawan)<br>Occurred ,<br>formatted , | يتكوَّن ( yatkwan )<br>Occur<br>Formulate | سيتكوَّن ( saytkwan)<br>Will occur<br>Will Formulate | تكوَّن ( takawon),<br>تكوين ( takween)<br>Occurrence<br>Formulation                 |

<sup>1</sup> Al-Fayrūzabādī, Al-Qamus Al-Muhit [Comprehensive Dictionary], (Beirut: Al-Resalah Publisher, 2005), p. 1128.



|             |  |  |            |
|-------------|--|--|------------|
| Generated , |  |  | Generation |
|             |  |  |            |

There is another meaning that was added to "kan" to refer to "abiding", in the sense of "eternal Being"<sup>1</sup>. This arose from its repeated use, in this sense, in the Qur'an. The first meaning of "kan" can be summarised in the following sentence:

كَانَتِ السَّمَاءُ زُرْقًا ("The sky was blue"), where "kan" = "was".

Then, second meaning is illustrated by its use in this classical text:

وَمَنْ يَكْسِبْ إِثْمًا فَإِنَّمَا يَكْسِبُهُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا

English 1: "And if anyone earns sin, he earns it against his own soul: for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom".

English 2: "And whoever earns sin, he earns it only against himself. And Allah is Ever All-Knowing, All-Wise".

English 3: "And whoever commits a sin only earns it against himself. And Allah is ever Knowing and Wise".

French : "Quiconque acquiert un péché, ne l'acquiert que contre lui-même. Et Allah est Omniscient et Sage".

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Jawhari, *al-Sihah fi al-Lugha*, The Correct Language, <http://www.baheth.info/all.jsp?term=كان> (accessed 01 July 2018)

German: "Und wer eine Sünde begeht, begeht sie nur gegen sich selbst. Allah ist Allwissend und Allweise"<sup>1</sup>.

Kan = "is"(English), "est" (French), "ist" (German).

In fact, the verb, "kana", which appears repeatedly in this text, is inconsistent with the meaning of "kana" as "was", because it is not possible that God was ("kan") All-Knowing, All-Wise, and All-Hearing, All-Seeing...etc. Rather, God simply is ("kana"). Therefore, this meaning of "kana" acts as an assertive function between subject and predicate.

As for the grammatical function of "kana", linguists have identified كان ("kan") both as a past and as an incomplete verb. As an incomplete verb, it has two meanings: the first requires it to have a predicate, unlike other verbs in Arabic; the second refers just to a past time, unlike other verbs which refer to time + action.

For example:

كان سقراط ("Socrates kan" ) = "Socrates was ....." (predicate required),

as opposed to:

سقراط عاش ("Socrates ash") which literally means "Socrates lived").

As for the other usage of "kan", that is, as a complete verb, in this case, it does not require a predicate. An example of this given by linguists is: كان الله ولا شيء معه<sup>2</sup> ("Kan Allah wla shay

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<sup>1</sup> Quran, [https://www.searchtruth.com/chapter\\_display\\_all.php?chapter=4](https://www.searchtruth.com/chapter_display_all.php?chapter=4) (accessed 6 February 2018).

<sup>2</sup> كان <https://www.almaany.com/ar/dict/ar-ar/> accessed 13 February, 2018.

maah") which means: "There is God and no one else". However, it should be noted that this is, in fact, two sentences in Arabic.

In summary, firstly, the lexical meaning of "kan" is "happening" or "occurrence". Therefore, "The sky was ("kan") Blue" = "Blueness occurred or happened to the sky in the past". It sometimes also signifies "to abide", the particular lexical meaning being "to be permanent", such as in the sentence "God is ("kan") wisdom", which means "The permanence of wisdom is an adjective to describe God".

Although "kan" has two functions, as a complete, and also an incomplete verb, its most common usage is the latter, that is, as a copula. Brague indicates that the copula is used not in the present in Arabic, but only in the past and future<sup>1</sup>. So, on the basis of this, "kana" behaves in the same way as "was"/ "were" in English, that is, as the past simple tense of the verb "to be". However, the present tense of this verb is quite different, functionally, from that of the verb "to be" in English, as it refers to a future possibility.

This, then, is a brief outline of the lexical meaning and grammatical functions of the verb "kan" as they were specified in the early centuries preceding the formulation of philosophical thought. It is very important to note that this codification of Arabic played a key role in the process of understanding and interpreting "Being" in the context of the Sacred.

With regards to the philosophical context of "kan", especially in the translation that Ibn Rushed used in his commentary on the Book Delta {1013a 24} of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, the term

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<sup>1</sup> Rémi Brague, 'Existence, Arabic wuğūd, and Vorhandenheit, , in Barbara Cassin (ed), ' *Dictionary of Untranslatables*  
*A Philosophical Lexicon* ", p. 1212.

"kaunona" is mentioned as the precise equivalent of the Greek term εἶναι ("einai")<sup>1</sup>. The exact paragraph from Book Delta, translated into English reads:

‘Cause’ means (1) that from which, as immanent material, a thing comes into being, e.g. the bronze is the cause of the statue and the silver of the saucer, and so are the classes which include these. (2) The form or pattern, i.e. the definition of the essence, and the classes which include this (e.g. the ratio 2:1)<sup>2</sup>.

Although Ibn Rushed explains the term "kaunona", in the scholastic sense, as the "essence of something", this understanding is derived from only one function to verb “to be”, that is, as "identity", as in the question "What is something?" (*"Ma Yakoun shay ma?"*). This is referring to "essence" which requires a definition<sup>3</sup>.

Nevertheless, there still remains a lack of clarity concerning the meaning of "kaunona" ("Being"). In an attempt to place the verb "kan" in the context of philosophy, Meskini makes a reference to the way in which it was used in classical philosophical texts, that is, as the synonym "mawjud", which has an existential meaning. This usage can also be seen in the well-known text of Al-Ghazi, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*:

This position can be explained by an illustration. When the sun is eclipsed, and later, its brightness re-emerges, it has passed through three states:

(i) a state when the eclipse did not exist, but its existence might be anticipated, that is, one might say, 'It will be' ('saykon'),

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<sup>1</sup> Meskini, *Al-Tafkir ba'd Heidegger*, p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. W. D. Ross, <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/metaphysics.5.v.html> accessed 14 Feb 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Meskini, *Al-Tafkir ba'd Heidegger*, p. 40.

(ii) the second state when it was actually existing, that is, 'It is' ('kaun') [and]

(iii) the third state where it is again non-existent; but a short while ago, it had been-i.e. 'was' ('kan').

Now, corresponding to these three states, there are three different cognitions. At first, we knew that the eclipse does not exist, but that its existence might be expected. Then, we knew that 'it is' (kaun), and, finally, we know that 'it was' ('kan'), although, at present, 'it is not'. Now, a succession (in the same place) of these three different and multiple cognitions necessitates a change in the cognisant Being. For if, after the re-emergence of the Sun, one were to say that the eclipse exists in the present, this would not be an act of knowledge, but of ignorance. Similarly, at the time of the existence of an eclipse, it would be ignorance to say that it did not exist. This demonstrates that no one of these cognitions can be substituted for another.<sup>1</sup>

Here, Meskini interprets the infinitive "kaan" as having an existential meaning, as in the sentence, "There is an eclipse of the sun", and he believes that this usage is more authentic than "mawjud" in spoken Arabic.

Based on the above, the term "Being" in ancient Greek may be understood as "physis" ["phusis"], in the sense of the entity which is emerging or opening suddenly, by itself. Consequent on this understanding, the ancient Greek philosophers assumed a particular way of behaving of this entity, which made the entity reveal itself. In the context of the Arabic language, "muwjud" was understood as "emerging" or "standing out from the background". In the philosophical sense, this

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Ghazali, *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa*, Sulyman Dunya (ed.), (Cairo: Dar al-Marif, 1972), p.p. 206-297.  
Al-Ghazali, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, trans., Sabih.A.Kamali, (Lahore: Pakistan Philosophical Congress 1963), pp. 153-154.

means "to stand out from nothing". It was this understanding that led to the assumption of the First Cause.

In order for Al-Meskini to liberate Being from this understanding, he reawakened the essential formula of the verb "to be" ("kaan"), which refers to the entity standing by itself, without reference to the cause of that entity. In fact, Meskini struggled in the context of Arabic, firstly, to liberate the concept of Being /entity, which had been interpreted and named as "mawjud", in its passive sense.

The term "kaen"("being")<sup>1</sup> includes everything we talk about, perceive or think about, before being classified by us as right or wrong, alive or inanimate, abstract or concrete, hidden or visible, or tool or art work. However, "kaan" does not reveal itself, but, rather, is revealed by a prior concept, which is "kaunona". This is a gerund of the verb "to be", which is found especially in Ibn Arabi, where it is used to refer to the First Truth. However, it is a term that has long been neglected by other philosophers. Meskini distinguishes between "kaunona" and "kaan", by referring to the former as "Sein" and the latter as "Seiend":

Being [Sein/Kaunouna] lies in the fact that something is, and in its Being as it is; in Reality; in presence-at-hand; in subsistence; in validity; in Dasein; in the "there is."<sup>2</sup>

It is well known that Greek philosophers, and Aristotle in particular, preferred to express the idea of "being", at first, via the plural form "τα όντα" ("beings") and, then, later, via the singular "το όν"[ on], ("being"). While "τα ον" is a type of noun, for the Greeks it was not a rigid noun but

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<sup>1</sup> Kaen .This expression, which is one of the infinitives of the Arabic verb, "Kan"(to be), refers to an entity that, semantically, is the general actor, whether it be a mountain, angel or goddess. Meskini insists that this term is the equivalent of the Greek term, .This term, 'Kaen' was ignored as a translation of..... by the early translator, .because they refused to acknowledge that an entity could emerge or stand by itself.

<sup>2</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.26. Oslo Heidegger, *Al-Kaunona Wa Al-Zaman*, p. 56.

could be used as an infinitive related to the verb “esti” (“to be”). Hence, the phrase, “τὸ ὄν ἢ ὄν” (“being qua being”) does not mean either this entity or that entity, individually, or as a whole, but always refers to “the in-being”; beingness, to be in-being and not through the Being itself<sup>1</sup>. Based on Heidegger’s interpretation, the term “Being” in ancient Greek was understood as “on”, in other words, “phusis”, in the sense of the entity which is emerging or opening suddenly, by itself. Thus, this emergent indicates the coming-into-appearance, as in unfolding, and holding.

“Phusis”, in this sense of “emergence”, can manifest itself in many processes that can be observed in natural phenomena, such as the rising of the sun at dawn, the surging of the ocean waves, the sprouting of plants or the birthing process of animals and humans. However, the Greeks did not firstly observe this thing, called phusis, in nature. According to Heidegger, it was first disclosed to them through the fundamental experience of Being, in poetry and thought, and, only later, did they observe it in nature<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, the original meaning of the word included complementary ideas such as, heaven and earth, animal and human, as well as human history as the work both of men and the gods.

Based on the above, the term “Being” in ancient Greek may be understood as “physics”, in the sense of the entity which is emerging or opening suddenly, by itself, for “Being” is the single word that allows no predication, as when saying “that which is”, for this phrase can only be applied to an entity. Rather, “Being” is to be appropriated by saying: “there is being,” where the phrase, “there is”, is indicative of offering and giving. Being is that which offers and gives being – that is, the Being of entities. Being is the offeror, granter and almsgiver, where

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Sheehan, *Making Sense of Heidegger: A Paradigm Shift*, (London, New York: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2015), p. 34.

<sup>2</sup> M. Al- Sheikh, *Nqd Al-Hadatha fi Fkr Heidegger, Critique of modernity in Heidegger's thought*, (Beirut: Arab Network for Research and Publishing, 2008), p. 262.

what is being given is Being, itself. Thus, the essential structure of Being is offering, granting and giving. This act of giving means finding a “space,” “opening,” or “gap”, by virtue of which an entity is manifested, brought into light or appears, namely its being. The notions of “offering” and “meriting” continued to attract Heidegger’s attention, so much so, that in his work, he takes “offering” – of which the German expression “Es gibt” is the equivalent - beyond Being itself, at the same time, so that Being and time are rendered equal, that is, he makes Being, itself, into both the granter and the granted, for Being is the granting granter and the granting granted. Thus, this is similar to saying that, “existence is affected by generosity,” and that “generosity is affected by existence”, for he considers generosity as primordial and existence as dependent.

This offering should not be understood in terms of “cause,” “agent,” “maker,” or “creator.” Understood in this way, offering belongs to what Metaphysics has traditionally thought of as “cause” of being of entities or as “efficient agent.” Herein, lies the conceptual trick, for which even the brightest theologians fell, since this type of language is very close to the language of mystics: it is none of the business of Being to “create,” “act,” or “cause,” for it is neither creator, nor agent, nor cause. Nor is there a relationship between it and entities, in terms of “creation,” “action,” or “causality”.<sup>1</sup>

This is similar to the religious perception of God, for Being has nothing to do with God, nor is it the foundation or grounding on which the world rests. Yet, the connection between Being and entity is one of “acting.” As Being is not compared to anything other than itself, it can do nothing by itself; it does not involve any causal act; there is no causal relationship with what comes before, that is, there is nothing acting on or directing Being. Nor is there any action resulting from its

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<sup>1</sup> M. Al- Sheikh, *Nqd Al-Hadatha fi Fkr Heidegger*, pp.161- 162.



manifestation, because Being is not contained in any entity. However, if it is understood as being equal to God, how, then, how can it be said that God is an entity? Likewise, is not thinking of Being as God, in fact, making Being equal to an entity?

In this case, therefore, there is a statement written at the entrance to Heidegger's philosophical world that says: Philosopher! Leave behind every understanding of Being generated from common sense, that is, the understanding of existence as "that which is", and of Being as "universe". Cast off the false belief which says, "Without existence, we would not exist; without Being we would not be..."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Heidegger would undermine common sense and metaphysics alike. Hence, he reversed the above belief by saying that, without us, Being would not be. This does not indicate a tendency to Humanism, which holds that a human being is the centre of the universe; it only means that a human being is the single "place" where Being opens up, and, thus, is understood and manifested. Therefore, the relationship between Being and entities is not that of "causing," "explaining," or "acting", that is, in the sense of a causal, explanatory or active relationship. Nor is Being the "foundation", "cause" or "explanation" of entity. So, therefore, it was a must for readers of Heidegger's philosophy to cast off such notions as "explanation," "cause," and "action," and replace them with a verb, whose weight is concealed behind those nouns which Metaphysics used to think of - namely, that of "offering," "gifting," "granting," and "giving", in the sense of liberating an entity of its concealment in Being and opening it up to the world, or, expressed in an even better way- clearing the way for the entity to be. Indeed, Being is that which grants entity its mode of Being, that which constitutes its definitive being. All this is grounded in a prior knowledge that "constitution" does not mean anything other than "action," "causing," "producing,"

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. p.162.

“creating,” or “enabling,” in the sense of making an entity “potential.” Constitution is gifting and granting, whereas Being is only that which gifts or grants to entity its due Being.

Meskini considers Heidegger to be of great importance to contemporary Arab philosophers. This is, principally, because Arab culture had been hermeneutical since the writing of the Mu'allaqat, a group of seven long Arabic poems, and remained so during the period when the Quran was written, as well as during the later period of indigenised language. Furthermore, Heidegger's Hermeneutics provided Arab philosophers with the opportunity to overcome Metaphysics. The thinking of Heidegger revealed to us the theological meaning, which slowly infiltrated into the Arabic language, and is still dominant today<sup>1</sup>.

It can be seen that the early translators' and philosophers' choice of the terms to express the concept of Being was deliberate, because they worked within a society that gave to language a religious interpretation where entities were created by an invisible Creator, and where objects existed, or emerged through existence. Furthermore, philosophers, at that time, were not satisfied with Aristotle's "einai" ("Being"), including “eternity”, so they looked for an interpretation that was more compatible with religion, that is, one that did not conflict with monotheism<sup>2</sup>.

Thus, the question of Being, which was high-lighted by Heidegger, presented an important opportunity to rethink and revitalise the ontological lexicon in Arabic, which was shifting as a result of spiritual decisions and the valuing of what is the marginal and invisible.

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<sup>1</sup> Fathi. Meskini, *Interviews*, Qadhaya Islamiya Muasira, vol.18, n.57-58<sup>th</sup>, 2014, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Some contemporary Arabic scholars have attempted to make an equivalence between Heidegger's Being, and God, especially the type of god, that, according to Negative Theology, is not an entity. This, despite the fact that Heidegger said that “Being” .... is not God and not a cosmic ground. Being is essentially farther than all beings and is yet nearer to the human being than every being, be it a rock, a beast, a work of art, a machine, be it an angel or God. Being is the nearest. Yet the near remains farthest from the human being. Human beings at first cling always and only to beings”. M. Heidegger, ‘*letter on humanism*’, *Pathmark*, trans. F. A. Capuzzi, (United Kingdom: Cambridge University 1998), p. 252.

Does this, then, mean that “overcoming Metaphysics” and its connotation of nihilism would be rendered impossible in the positive sense? No, for overcoming metaphysics can be positively achieved. If we sought to do this, we would notice at first that the overcoming is conditional upon one essential thing: it does not mean the overcoming of an "academic discipline" called metaphysics. Rather, it means the overcoming of a “condition” or “historical attitude.” Metaphysics has, in no way, ever been a branch of knowledge concerned with a specific domain. All that we commit ourselves to, from the outset, is the elimination of the prevailing perception of metaphysics as being a discipline among others. It is important to recall, here, that what is essential about metaphysics is that it involves thinking about entity, and the forgetfulness of Being whose object is thinking, not about Being, in itself, but about entities. This way of thinking is the nothingness of Being, that is to say, true nihilism and the overcoming of metaphysics is only possible by remembering the forgotten Being. Furthermore, metaphysics has never been a specific discipline, rather, it is a dominant “structure of thought”, the history of thought whose destiny is Being. There is no room, here, to make exceptions in the name of a non-metaphysical school or naysayer to metaphysics; even when Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, for example, attempted to “escape metaphysics,” they continued to do some kind of Metaphysics, based on closed thinking. The importance of Nietzsche’s work perhaps lies in the fact that he was the first to realise that metaphysics is an integrated structure. In fact, thinking in its entirety, from that of Ancient Greece, to Arabic-Islamic thought and up until that of Nietzsche, is metaphysical<sup>1</sup>.

In sum, Meskini’s deconstruction of the language of Being dismantled the understanding of the essence of the human being that prevailed in the Arabic culture, in order to replace it with a new

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<sup>1</sup> Al- Sheikh, *Nqd Al-Hadatha fi Fkr Heidegger*, p. 625.

interpretation. The reason for this is obvious, in view of the fact that Heidegger considered that an understanding of Being can only be accessed by a new analysis of the nearest entity:

We are too late for the gods and too

early for Being. Being's poem,

just begun, is Man.<sup>1</sup>

Heidegger, according to Meskini, laid down what is called "the hermeneutic of self". This has provided, for over a century, the critique of Arabic thinking about the human being, or, what Meskini calls, 'identity thinking.

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, language, thought*, trans. Hofstadter, (New York & Sydney: Perennial Classics, 2001), p. 4.

## Second Chapter: Multiple meanings of Huwiyya ((Identity, Subjectivity, Selfhood)

### I Preface

In the Arabic/Islamic world, there was a period, beginning in the twelfth century (with Averroes's death in 1198), which was characterised by a marked absence of authentic philosophical thinking. This intellectual 'drought' ended with the resumption of renewed thinking in the late nineteenth century. This was an important milestone in Arabic/Islamic thinking as these new thinkers were exposed, for the first time, to the modern Western philosophies that had been introduced during the occupation of Egypt by Napoleon's armies, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

From then until the present time, all intellectual discussion has been shaped by two key theological thinkers, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (1838-1897) and his disciple Muḥammad 'Abduh (1849-1905). When Muhammad published his Arabic translation of al-Afghānī's book, the title he chose, "Al-Radd 'ala al-Dahriyya"<sup>1</sup> (The Refutation of the Materialists), marked the birth of a new way of thinking. This placed modernity at the centre of thought and argument - a modernity that reflected the shift away from the religious view of Man to one that sees human beings as the source of ethics and knowledge. This shift profoundly influenced all subsequent philosophical discussion.

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<sup>1</sup> It is necessary, at this point, to explain the origin of the collective noun, 'Al-Dahriyya' which is used by Abduh, here, as referring to materialism, or materialistic opinion. It must be understood that, in the past, this term referred to the belief that time was infinite. Al-Ghazali, in his book 'The Incoherence of the Philosophers', called philosophers who adhered to the idea of dahriyya (eternity) dahriyyun. Both terms are derived from dahr, meaning 'Time'. From the morphological point of view, the suffix -iyya, denotes an abstract, and is added to the active participle dahr (Time), which is taken from the following Quranic expression:

*"They say there is nothing, save our life in this world; we die and we live and only dahr (Time) destroys us (makes us perish)".* It is this pre-Islamic meaning of time that Meskini will re-interpret to reveal the meaning of Being in the Islamic-Arabic context.

Yitzhak Y. Melamed, (ed.) *Eternity: A History*, (USA: Oxford University Press 2016), pp.117-118.

'Dahr' 'Dahriyya', the encyclopedia of Islam, B. Lewis et al (ed.) (Netherlands: Leiden. E.J. Brill, 1991), vol.2, pp. 95-96.

However, it should be noted that Muhammad did not understand modernity in terms of the model of the Enlightenment; on the contrary, he considered it as a new type of materialism, or, in other words, another *Millah*<sup>1</sup>.

According to Meskini, when Abduh chose the term ‘materialism’, it was an interpretation rather than merely a translation, that is, he believes that the thinker understood modernity simply as another form of materialism. This interpretive decision had its source in a certain conception of radical innovation, ‘Bid’a’, as heresy.<sup>2</sup> This judgment of modern philosophy, which was inherited

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<sup>1</sup> Although the term *Millah* usually refers to religious communities, Meskini used it with two related meanings. The first was the meaning Al-Farabi attributed to it, that of ‘a public city,’ which is theorised by religion, as opposed to the perfect city, which is theorized by philosophers. In this way, *Millah* is a comprehensive concept of the non-philosophical elements of the city that Al-Farabi had experienced, and which, later, formed the basis of the Theological-Political Treatise of Spinoza. Al-Farabi’s view of *Millah* is of a non-philosophical community invented by the Abrahamic religions, as opposed to a community of the philosophic homeland, conceived by Greek reason. In Al-Farabi’s *Millah*, the source of law is Revelation, rather than political science, a branch of practical philosophy. Because the science of *Millah* is polemic and rhetoric, it is predetermined, and, so, cannot become the universal knowledge or universal ethics that constitute jurisprudence both of which are demonstrative sciences. Therefore, because of its nature, *Millah* is ill-equipped to meet the needs of citizens. The second meaning of *Millah* is that proposed by Meskini. It is based on Heidegger’s notion of the ‘horizon of understanding’ (Horizont für Verständnis) as something that we can neither widen nor go beyond, but that provides the limits for certain intellectual activities performed ‘within’ it. Meskini considers *Millah* as the horizon of understanding, but one that has a theological basis. This type of predetermined interpretation can be liberated only by means of a phenomenological explanation, along with the deconstruction of the tradition that the interpretation is based on.

Fathi Meskini, *Al-Huwiyya wa Al-zaman: ta’welat phenomenologia le moshklat Al-nahn, Identity and Time : phenomenological hermeneutics of the question of the ‘We’*. (Beirut: Dar Al-Taliaa, 2001), p.47.

<sup>2</sup> Bid’a means ‘innovation’, a belief or practice without precedent in the Prophet’s time, a meaning similar to that of muhdath (something created) and hadith (event). Meanwhile, the antonym of bid’a is sunna (the Prophet’s advice). Traditional Muslims automatically believed that any innovation, by its very nature, was evil. Therefore, to reflect the changing times, a distinction had to be made between a bid’a which was ‘good’ (Hasana) or praiseworthy (maftmuda), and one which was ‘bad’ (sayyi’a) or blameworthy (madhmuma). According to a principle laid down by Al-Shafici, any innovation which was not in keeping with the Quran, the sunna, idjma\*, and orathar (a tradition traced only to a Companion or a Follower) was an undesirable innovation, whereas any such innovation that was good was admirable and, acceptable. On this basis of this distinction, innovations must be classified into five categories (ahkam) based on Muslim law. The category entitled ‘duties incumbent on the community (fard kifya)’ includes bid’as, such as the study of grammar and rhetoric, which is the basis for understanding the Quran and the ‘sunna’, investigation of the reliability of men who possess the authority to reinforce traditional values and practices, distinguishing between strong and weak traditions, codifying law, and refuting heretical sects. The remaining categories include things that are forbidden (muharrama), such as the doctrines of those who are in opposition to traditional beliefs, those that are disapproved of (makruha), such as the decoration and ornamentation of holy objects, those that are recommended (mubaha), such as the establishment of schools and hospitals, and those that are permitted (mubaha), such as foods, drinks and clothing. However, bid’a, in many ways, is different from heresy. Rather than all disagreement with the Prophet being described as heresy, it is said that this particular rebellion arises from a sort of confusion. Innovators are called Ahl albid’a\* and Ahi al-ahwa\*. The implication is that the innovator (mubtadi’) is one who arbitrarily introduces something new without its having any basis in the foundations of Islam. This implied criticism of bid’a has resulted, today, in some Muslims denouncing the use of tobacco and coffee, and even of modern scientific inventions; however, even

from the past, used concepts that were derived from the sciences of *Millah*, which are called in Arabic, *Ilm al-Kalām* (Islamic scholastic theology). “Al-Radd (The Refutation) and al-Dahriyyia (the Materialists) are both concepts that belong to the age of Islamic scholastic theology, a theology which constitutes the basis of the Islamic faith, and which was defined by Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) as follows:

This is a science that involves arguing with logical proofs in defence of the articles of faith, and refuting innovators who deviate in their dogmas from the early Muslims and Muslim orthodoxy.<sup>1</sup>

According to Meskini, both Al-Afghānī and Abduh perceived the thinking of the modern philosophers as just a new version of materialism. However, he argues that, in fact, their thinking encompasses more than that; there is also “wonder”<sup>2</sup> (Thaumazein) which, in the past, led to the birth of philosophy. Meskini asserts that the reception of modernity by the Arabic world is quite different from its reception of Greek philosophy in the ninth century, despite some scholars' attempting to equate the two, and then use this to challenge articles of faith. Their argument is based on the fact that the adjective, Dahriyya, was already being used to describe the thinking of the earliest philosophers on the eve of the Islamic period.

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among the Wahhabis, the strictest body within modern Islam, scientific inventions are freely used. While this distinction between 'good' and 'bad' innovations was necessary at that time, only ultraconservative Muslims, who live in a world that is out of touch with reality, could insist that we strictly follow the teachings of the Prophet and his Companions, without making any concessions to the development of knowledge, and the changing circumstances of the modern world. Nevertheless, a number of statements of the Prophet, condemning innovations, are found in the collections the Hadith, see ‘BID’A’. The encyclopedia of Islam, H.A. R. Gibb, et al. (ed.) (Netherlands: Leiden. E.J. Brill, 1986), vol. 1, p. 1199.

<sup>1</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah*, vol.2, (Damascus: Dar Al-Balkh, 2004), p. 205.

See also THE MUQADDIMAH, trans. F. Rosenthal.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle said that it is “through wonder that men now begin, and originally began, to philosophise; wondering in the first place at obvious perplexities, and, then, by gradual progression, raising questions about the greater matters too, e.g. about the changes of the moon and of the sun, about the stars and about the origin of the universe. Now, he who wonders and is perplexed feels that he is ignorant (thus, the myth-lover is, in a sense, a philosopher, since myths are composed of wonders.” (*Metaphysics*, 982 b12-20) This part of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* cannot be found in the Arabic translation, which was notated by Averroes.

Meskini says that when Greek philosophy was first received in the Arabic world, they viewed it another way of thinking, another language and another culture. These views were then used by philosophers, beginning with al-Kindi (801-873), and later Al-Farabi (870 -951) and Averroes, to try to justify its entry into the Islamic-Arab space as a universal of truth<sup>1</sup>. Of this, Al-Kindi said:

We ought not to be ashamed of appreciating the truth and of acquiring it wherever it comes from, even if it comes from races distant and nations different from us. For the seeker of truth, nothing takes precedence over the truth, and there is no disparagement of the truth, nor belittling either of him who speaks it or of him who conveys it. (The status of) no one is diminished by the truth; rather does the truth ennoble all.<sup>2</sup>

In the Greek age, Meskini notes, wonder was a factor that was crucial to philosophising about Being in its being, and so it frequently featured in discussions both by Plato and Aristotle. However, in a monotheistic context, particularly that of Islamic-Arabic thought, there was, without doubt, a sort of admiration of Greek thinking, and, particularly, of their demonstrative reason or formal logic. Al-Ghazali (1056–1111), in particular, was especially intrigued by Aristotle’s logic, even though he was strongly opposed to the Peripatetic Islamic philosophers.

It seemed to Islamic philosophers of this time that thinking about Being as universal truth had the potential to reconcile religious and philosophical truths and, by inference, to indigenise Aristotelian philosophy. Thus, a quest for truth became their goal. However, as Meskini notes, this quest showed no serious evidence of discussion about philosophical wonder.

They considered modernity as “Other”. This was referred to as “Ajami” (foreign), a linguistic adjective denoting those who do not speak Arabic, and it had been in the semantic sub-field of the

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<sup>1</sup> Meskini, *Al-Huwiyya wa Al-zaman*, p.47.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Kindi, *Rasa’il Al-Kindi Al-Falsafiyya*, p.153 also *Al-Kindi’s Metaphysics*, p.58.



language since its inception. With the arrival of modernity, this was replaced by “Ajnabi,” an adjective that derived its significance from the idea of exclusion and avoidance.

Using the concept of wonder, Meskini points out that the modern phenomenon of terrorism, in the contemporary Arabic context, represents society’s reaction to the shock of modernity. This terrorism is a type of identity that has lost its ability to think of itself in a constructive way. In fact, Meskini perceives it as a kind of nihilism that wants to liberate itself from the trauma of this shock by resuming an identity - what we are- that no longer exists<sup>1</sup>.

Thus, wonder includes confusion, suspicion and panic. Therefore, the wonder of modernity was, and still is, an ontological problem, and not just a tendency of the traditional soul. Wonder can change the understanding of the meaning of Being, as has happened in every age.

In this sense, says Meskini, there has been an essential relationship between wonder and modernity throughout the ages. This relationship should not be considered a phenomenon that belongs to any particular individual or group; rather, it belongs to every culture that finds itself faced with a new era where it has not been able to shape its own identity. Therefore, he concludes that wonder leads to a genuine preservation of Self.

Although wonder is a spiritual fact that afflicts every culture from within, Meskini says that we rarely date it from the inside. This is because we assume that it is a transient emotion which we must overcome. However, all the ways of thinking that have been adopted by modern Arabs in an attempt to escape the astonishment of modernity, have been violent and ineffective.

There are two types of reactions to the wonder of modernity, according to Meskini. The first of these he calls “theological wonder”. This reaction is seen in the thinking of Afghani and Abduh,

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<sup>1</sup> Meskini, *Al-Huwiyya wa Al-zaman*, p. 60.

and those coming after them, and it was thinkers like these who initiated contemporary Arab thinking. They believed that it was possible to reconcile technology (the sciences) and religious truths, that is, by extracting an interpretation that is within the earlier field of onto-theology.

The second type of reaction was a positive one. Those who reacted in this way did not consider modernity as *beda* (heresy), that is, as though it were another faith that went against their *Millah*. Instead, they derived a new term with a positive connotation, *ybda*, from the same root verb, *yabda*. This new word was *Ibdaa*, which means “innovated without previous paradigm.” This kind of reception Meskini called “aesthetic wonder”, that is, a state of reason that liberates theological wonder and looks to indigenise the thinking of modernity in the Islamic-Arabic culture. Those who reacted in this way included artists, poets and writers, and they were the first to make great strides in establishing modernity as the last horizon of contemporary Man. They worked on uncovering the unspoken meaning of wonder; this included *wjd* (ecstasy), *walla*, (enthralment/ becoming interesting and exciting/ the act of being attracted irresistibly). Therefore, “wonder” in Arabic was interpreted as “to be amazed to the point of losing one’s rational reason. Self-astonishment, then, is the state of overcoming the fundamental position of religious demands for a new era<sup>1</sup>.

In sum, this spiritual wonder has challenged the Arabic mind to move beyond the realm of *Millah*, and embrace modernity - a process that involves creating a pattern of thinking, which those who cling to traditional ways, notions or religious ideologies could never countenance. From such a process has emerged the concept of Arabic-Islamic reason, which uses modern methods to critique traditions. The conflict arising from this clash of tradition and modernity revealed the hitherto

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 59.

hidden human identity as either authentic or contemporary. However, more importantly, it drew attention away from the real philosophical task: to question what we are in this new era.

## II. Multiple meanings of Huwiyya in the question of the "We"

The issues of Arab-Islamic reason concerning We, tradition, and modernity, that preoccupied Arab intellectuals in the past, have persisted until now. Although the thinking about identity, when related to an individual or society, would normally be considered the domain of anthropology or sociology, it is possible, in some cases, that it would also fall within the bounds of philosophical problems. This is especially so if we accept Heidegger's assertion that the question of who the human being is, is inextricably connected to that of Being. He goes even further, by stating that this question is not an anthropological one at all, but rather a metaphysical question<sup>1</sup>.

Later, Meskini took up this question of the identity of the human being, reinterpreting it in the Arabic context. An important aspect of this work was examining the multiple meanings of the Arabic term *huwiyya*. In the past, it was used as the equivalent of the two Greek terms for Being: *τὸ ὄν* (onta) and *εἶναι* (Enai). Meskini's task was to reveal the shifts that the meaning of the original Arabic term underwent, over the centuries, until it assumed the anthropological meaning of "we" as "identity", as opposed to *ghayyyria* (Otherness). The shifts occurred in a series, as follows: *huwiyya* was derived, initially, from the third person, *huwa* (he). This shifted to the logical copula, *huwa* (is), which then shifted to the ontological meaning, *huwa huwa* that literally means "he is he" or "sameness." In addition to Meskini's work, *huwiyya* was also translated in a number of

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans., G.Fried and R. Polt., (New Haven & London: Yale Nota Bene book, 2000), p.149.

ways, in Mediaeval Latin, as well as in a number of modern European languages, as "*ipseity*" (selfhood). This would seem to be the term to which it most precisely corresponds<sup>1</sup>.

In undertaking this work, Meskini, following in Heidegger's footsteps, is trying to find an answer to the problem of "who we are". This kind of question is not connected to any particular place, but, rather, is a philosophical or universal one that was initiated by Heidegger in his work, *Being and Time*, as an analysis of the question of who we are. Heidegger differentiates between the question concerning the essence of the human being, and that of the essence of any other entity by using "who", and "what", respectively. His formulation of this question (*Frage nach dem Wer*) can be found in *Being and Time* (section 25). In this way, he replaces the traditional metaphysical understanding, which did not differentiate between the being of Man as existence who is, and other entities, which have being as presence-at-hand in the broadest sense.

Later, Heidegger again took up the question of "who" the human being is, in a lecture 'Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language', similar to what Kant did in his study of logic. What was new in Heidegger's lecture was that this question was derived from the question about the essence of language. It was no longer an existential question about human beings, but one that investigated the meaning of language as human speech in the history of Being, thus continuing and changing the attempts of philosophers, from Plato to Nietzsche, to seek the historical meaning of Being. Therefore, the modern Cogito does not reveal the essence of the human being, and this is a sign of the inaccessibility of this essence without the language of Being.<sup>2</sup> Heidegger says:

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<sup>1</sup> Meskini, *Al-Huwiyya wa Al-zaman*, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Fathi Meskini, *AL- Faylsof w Al-Empratoria : Fi Tanwer Al- Ensan Al-Akheer, Philosopher and Empire : into Enlightenment of last Man*, (Morocco: Centre Cultural Arabe 2005), p. 33.

What is the human being? However, now begins the same difficulty that we have already encountered with the fore-question. Language, to be sure, is not now hanging in the air, but belongs to the being of the human being. Yet, where does the human being belong? Where does the human being stand in the whole of being?<sup>1</sup>

The challenge is then to understand the nature of the difficulty referred to by Heidegger. Is it a difficulty which arises from each question about essence (die Wesensfrage), because each is a fore-question. The questioning concerning the essence is not obvious, for its nature is peculiar to it. It is characterised by the three different directions in which it leads us; the question of the essence is a fore-question [Vorfrage], because:

1. it makes the way [vorgeht], opening up an area in which dwells what the human being is.
2. in this fore-thrusting [Vorstossen], it, at the same time, questions forth [hervorfragt] the first references from that which is inquired, the first features, the contour, and, thereby, illuminates what belongs, for example, to language, wherein the ground of its being subsists.
3. it is the precursor [vorausgeht] of all specific questioning, which lies hidden.<sup>2</sup>

If language is understood as the field of the question of essence, it is reasonable to say that language exists only when it is spoken, because, principally, it is the activity of human beings. Therefore, the essence of language can be determined by the nature of the human being.

This mode of problematic caused Heidegger to consider the difficulty related to Kant's "what-questioning" of the definition of the human being, which had its origin in the Roman interpretation

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, trans., Wanda Torres Gregory and Yvonne Unna, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2009), p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 18.

of the well-known Greek phrase ζῶον λόγον ἔχον, as *Homo est animal rationale*, that is, “the human being is a living being, that is, a rational one”<sup>1</sup>. This represents a displacement by the Romans, of the meaning of Man as a living being who has the ability to speak, by the theoretical one of Man as a rational living being.

Thus, any attempt to access the essence of the human being is still faced with this problem: if the essence of the human being is determined by the essence of language, then the essence of language is determined by the essence of the human being. This sets off a circular form of reasoning which leads us into a vortex. Heidegger maintains that we should not try to find a way out of the circle, but should simply remain in it and set the vortex in motion, because, unlike science, philosophising moves in a vortex. In fact, philosophising is nothing but constant being underway in the fore-field of the fore-questions<sup>2</sup>.

Heidegger says that the way out of this circle is to reformulate the what-questioning, as such questioning treats a human being as just another thing or being-at-hand (*vorhanden*). If we do this, then, we are searching for his features and categories.

Alternatively, we can ask, for example, "How is the human being?", meaning, “How is he constituted?”. However, it soon becomes evident that this question will take us back to the question, "What is the human being?" To find a way out, we need to acknowledge, firstly, that we are asking the wrong question. The question of essence arises because we perceive the strangeness of an entity. By questioning this strangeness, we do not remove it, we simply face up to what is strange. We then clarify this strangeness by using what-questioning. However, when we encounter a human being, what-questioning is not appropriate. Instead we need to “inquire about and

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 24.

experience the human being, not in the realm of the Thus or What, but in the realm of such and such [des Der und Der, der Die und Die], of the We”<sup>1</sup>, that is, we need to ask not “What is the human being?” but “Who is the human being?”, as the prior question.

The position or destination which is hinted at, here, by Heidegger is daily formulated as a factual answer, like “I” or “You” or “We”.

Questions about who we are ourselves, who you are yourself and who I am myself, all have a common point of reference, which is self. Thus, it is evident that the answer to the fore-question is that the human being is a *self*. Of course, we have a vague notion of what “self” means in the context of “I myself”, “you yourself” and “we ourselves,” but, still, some ambiguity remains; we are left with the problem of what “self” really means as a concept, and we must have a grasp of this concept before we can arrive at an understanding of the essence of “self”. Thus, we realise that what we thought was the answer to the fore-question is only a temporary binding of the strange; the strange is still very much with us.<sup>2</sup>

However, what is really strange is not that we lack a definition of ‘self’, but rather that our questioning twice missed the mark, by asking “What” and “How” questions, instead of “Who”.

Now that we are asking Who-questions, the answer, “he himself,” to the question, “Who is a human being?”, is correct, but only in so far as we are asking the right question. This is similar to how science establishes whether or not something is correct. However, just because the answer is correct does not mean that it is true, in the philosophical sense, for the answer, “He himself”, hides from us the truth about who we are. Since it is very clear that the difficulty lies in the fact

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p 31.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 32.

that the questioner and the inquired about are one and the same, that is, if we ask the question about who a human being is, we are actually asking about ourselves, the critical question should no longer be, either, “What is a human being?” or “Who is a human being?”, but, rather “Who are we ourselves?”. We could ask “What is self?” but this question does not cover all aspects of a human being. So, according to Heidegger, this question may be correct, in a scientific way, but it is not true, in the sense that it does not help us to arrive at the answer, “A human being is self.”<sup>1</sup>

In the face of this challenge, modern thinking has been shaken up, in terms of the perception of the human being as subject and subjectivity, as opposed to object and objectivity. Irrespective of whether a human being is understood as ego, consciousness, pure reason or spirit, all these answers are related to the What-question. However, they also pertain to the Who-question if we answer with “I myself”, because the “I” is determined by self, rather than vice-versa. This ‘self’ is ourselves. According to Heidegger:

[...] even if I say "you and you and I," there still is a We: We, who stand under a certain mandate, who find ourselves in a special situation. If I say "I and you and you," then that means that the I is placed opposite the [plural] You: a relationship of standing-opposite, for example, for lecturer and audience, better: a relationship of leading-the-way and, spoken here from the point of the students, of sitting opposite, of going along or perhaps also not going along. In this reciprocal relationship of the I and [plural] You, there lies a peculiar relationship of reference.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 37.



The problem is not that the essence of a human is a thinking being, but that the what- question is not the authentic question to ask about a human being. Despite being correct, according to the scientific method, it is just one of the possible questions about essence.

The character of selfhood has no distinguishing determination of the I, but the human being as himself is above all I and You and We and You [plural], and equally original. It must be emphasised that the human being is not a self because he is an I, but, rather, the converse, that is, that he can only be an I because he is, in essence, a self. The He-Himself is neither limited to the I, nor reducible to the I. Hence, from the rightly understood self, no way leads to the I, as essential ground, otherwise the self would remain in the I-likeness.

It could be argued that I-Myself, You-Yourself/You-Yourselves and We-Ourselves can be explained as subordinate kinds of self, just as different kinds of trees, such as fir, beech, oak and birch are all types of the species 'tree'. Likewise, the determinate I, You and We are subordinate cases of I, You, We, in general. Therefore, as this kind of I is also an example of self, I am self. However, there is a flaw in this kind of reasoning: when I refer to myself, besides using 'I', I can also use 'You', 'You' (plural), and 'We', as 'I myself' also essentially belongs to others (belongingness). Therefore, the analogy of the different kinds of trees as being examples of the common species 'tree' cannot be applied here, as the relationship is quite different: I, You, You (plural) and We are not kinds of self, and neither are the individual I, you, We subordinate cases<sup>1</sup>. This brings us to the question of why we hesitate to define the self. The answer is that by defining the essence of self, we impose upon it a familiar logic, which has its roots in ancient Greek philosophy. While such logic seems entirely appropriate for defining a thing/object according to

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 39.

its species, kind or case, it is totally foreign when seeking the essence of a human being. This is because it would mean that I, as self, would have to be, simultaneously, an example both of the “I” and the other (You). Although this is absurd, there is still a tendency to cling to this familiar logic. However, if we are to understand the essence of self, we must break away from such logic, because, by using it, we would again move away from the authentic question: “Who are we ourselves?”, towards the What-question.

Historically, in trying to determine the essence of the human being, there has been an unconscious tendency to avoid the Who-question. This is because any question concerning the self is unfamiliar and troubling to us, as we are primarily not with ourselves, but wandering in self-forlornness and self-forgottenness. Regardless of this, we still ask, "Who are we ourselves?" which, while avoiding equating I with self, is also timely, as we are now concerned more with 'We', than was the case during the period of modernism, with its pre-occupation with 'I'. However, this notion of 'We' is superficial and misleading, in terms of the community. We can, in fact, be a group where the self-being is dispersed and lost in a herd-like, group mentality. In reality, those things that are essential for a community arise, not from the community, as a whole, but from the strength and solitude of the individual<sup>1</sup>.

The self-forlornness is still intimately related to the self – in the same way that a person who has lost their property still has a relationship with that property, even a bitter relationship, in so far as they have a desire to destroy that property. The self has not totally disappeared; it is still there, even in the forlornness. It employs all kinds of strategies to avoid and repress the self, so that, in

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p.43.

the end, we think we have found a solution to the forlornness, when, in fact, we are just escaping from ourselves. Heidegger says that none of us is immune from this.

The question asking what we are ourselves is not just wrong in terms of the method, but is also a mis-question inherent in the question about the essence of a human being. This mis-question necessarily occurs as a result of the tendency of the human being to confound the Who-question and the What-question, because we are, above all, not with ourselves. Heidegger explained it thus:

This hidden and unconscious resistance has its ground in the fact that we are first and foremost not with ourselves, roaming about in self-forlornness and self-forgottenness. For this reason, the question concerning the self is unfamiliar, troublesome, and uncanny to us<sup>1</sup>.

It can be argued that there is a theoretical advantage to be gained by replacing, “What are we ourselves?”, with, “Who are we ourselves?” for Heidegger believes that with the Who-question, we can fail to grasp ourselves just as we can in the exultation of the I. Conversely, we can find ourselves just as well by way of the I, as by way of the way of the You (plural) and We, for all of them are concerned with determining the self-being.

The Who-question is such that it urges us towards ourselves:

Whether we place ourselves against the question or with it, or whether we let it pass by in undisturbed placidness - each time, a decision is made about ourselves. Even if we let the question pass by, we are affected and branded as those who shirk, those who, however, otherwise continue to do well.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. p 43.

Next to this taking direction toward ourselves, the questioning is of such a kind that, depending on who we are ourselves, the question becomes more capable of being asked or less capable of being asked. This changing capability of being asked does not mean, however, that the question would become more familiar to us. For, the more familiar it is, the less is it genuinely asked. Thus, we have indeed succeeded at first in aligning the question toward ourselves; yet, we have with this, in no way released the force that is bound in the question. We follow the question concerning ourselves. We know after all [that] the self could remain in self-forlornness. The fact that we are certain of the I- Myself-this certainty proves nothing at all yet.<sup>1</sup>

We, as a community of individual human beings, can be identified by our unique geographical place on the planet, and by the location of that planet in relation to other celestial bodies in the solar system and by where that solar system is located in the galaxy, and, ultimately, in terms of the location of those galaxies in the universe. Also, we can be defined by where our ‘here and now’ occurs in the sequence of time. However, Heidegger questions whether such external geographical and temporal specifications really answer the question of who *we* are.

These specifications, though important, could be applied equally to any animate or inanimate entity; in this way, they resemble the What-question since they provide an outer identification of the We. To truly understand Who we are, Heidegger says that we must start with the inner core. However, even if we attempt to do this, by charting the life stages of individuals, along with body measurements, and then compiled this data, and plotted them on graphs, we would still be closer to the What-question than the Who question. That is to say, we would still miss ourselves, just as

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p.46.

we did by defining ourselves in terms of geographical and temporal specifications. Heidegger says:

For this reason, it is possible that we unknowingly or knowingly resist this question, [that we] evade it - assuming that we move in a self-forlornness and want to hold on to this: in a self-forlornness, which is not a setting-away of the self, but encloses a definitive comportment toward the self. The human being remains also in the self-forlornness with himself and with his essence, only he has now fallen into the un-essence of his essence.<sup>1</sup>

Heidegger achieves, in this way, a hermeneutic of the unfamiliar that passes through us and that we cannot see. So, the 'Who' which belongs to the human being is no longer an ethnic cultural notion.

Philosophy does not reveal the meaning of the human being, except when contemporary reason falls within the vortex. The line of thinking about the essence of the human being was broken between Kant to Heidegger. This break marked the transition from the Anthropological stage, which was characterised by What-questioning, that is, by asking the question, "What is a human being?", to the Hermeneutical stage, inherent in the question, "Who is a human being". It seems that the What-question, when related to a human being, involves a difficulty: the human being is both subject and object at the same time. Therefore, in the face of this difficulty, the human being is not aware of what is empirical in him, except when he establishes his knowledge by the transcendental structure of his reason. The question, "Who is a human being?" circles around itself,

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p.47.

because the questioner is the enquirer, so the answer is about himself: it is part of him and, at the same time, he is the main element of the question<sup>1</sup>.

However, we know that every answer to the question about the essence of the human being, was, and still is, contained in space in the history of the human being, there is a space, or homeland, in which the human being existed. Therefore, is there any significance of the homeland in the context of the human being? To answer this question, Meskini needed the early Heidegger to examine this problem of the relationship of the human being and the homeland.

### **III The homeland and anxiety <sup>2</sup>**

The role of the philosopher, in relation to the city, has often been restricted to that of universal legislator, as it was in *Plato's Republic*. Thus, the concerns of the philosopher are still described in terms of those of the ancient Greek legislators, that is, striving for the perfect form of political order. This, too, was the major concern of Farabi's *Perfect City*, and it has continued to be an important issue even in the modern era, where there is a separation of political and moral thinking. Now, all questions concerning the state focus on identifying the best historical forms of government, political agenda and strategies that have existed from the time of Ibn Khaldun, to that of Habermas.

According to Meskini, there are some questions that we have not yet asked: What is the philosopher's political perception of dwelling in the 'city-state'? In what way does the philosopher

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<sup>1</sup> Meskini, *AL- Faylsof w Al-Empratoria*, p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> Title of a section of the second chapter of Meskini's book, '*AL- Faylsof w Al-Empratoria*' *Philosopher and Empire*. The title of this chapter is 'Heidegger and care of Being in the digital age, as a preface to political reading.' Meskini suggests reading Heidegger's texts as issues arising from practical and radical pragmatic concerns. The hermeneutics of everyday Dasein, as well as the topology of Being, constitute the main contributions of Heidegger to the fundamentals of first philosophy, which is different from the new beginning. Therefore, concepts, such as Dasein, everydayness, thrownness, publicness, idle talk, they and worldhood can all be read as radical, pragmatic concepts that include a hidden core-political meaning. Ibid, p.51.

belong to the city, especially today? Which homeland is the philosopher's home, in the new era, which is called the empirical era? Meskini insists that a 'city-state' can only exist if it is founded on the meaning of belongingness, and that the crucial question concerning belongingness is, "Who are We?" So, the question then becomes: In which mode of belongingness does the philosopher establish his dwelling in the 'city-state'<sup>1</sup>, in each era? However, down through history, 'city' and 'homeland' have signified merely the specific 'belongingness' of national or religious groupings. Given this, philosophers now are faced with the dilemma of how to take the question of the essence of the human being, that is, the Who-questioning, beyond the limits imposed by these historical meanings.

According to Meskini, Heidegger faced the challenge of answering these questions at two different times, and in two different ways, during his career. The way he did this the first time, can be seen if we read *Being and Time* from a political perspective, that is, in the sense of the "great politics" of Nietzsche<sup>2</sup>, rather than from a scholastic one, which precludes Heidegger from civic perceptions. The logic of this becomes clear when we take into consideration his declaration that our everyday life is the source of the feeling of uncanniness/unhomeliness (*Unheimlichkeit*). The

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<sup>1</sup>In his works, Meskini uses the Arabic translations of the original German terms of Heidegger. For the purpose of the present study, these are translated into English. For example, he uses (وطن) *watan* or (مدينة) '*medina*', which in this thesis, are translated, respectively, as 'homeland' and 'city'. However, undoubtedly, these English equivalents lose something of the semantic meaning of the Arabic terms, which, in turn, were taken from the original German and developed by Meskini in an Arabic context. For instance, both of these terms, in Arabic, have a verb from:

He *watan* (disposed and subjected his mind, or himself), to do the something

He *awatan* (undertook the thing, and submitted to it)

He *awatan* (took for himself as a home or settled place of abode) where the sense of 'abode' is a man's settled place; his place of constant residence; his dwelling; his home.

As for *medina*, and verb from it is *mdn* he abode, or dwelt مدن

Furthermore, the adjective, *mdni* is derived from the above verb. Its usage can be seen in Aristotle's common phrase: "A human being is by nature a political (*mdni*) animal." However, here *mdni* does not take on the common meaning of political, but, rather, the one that is derived from the Greek *polis*, and, so, means of or belonging to Medina, that is a civil/social city-dweller.

Thus, Meskini's question, "In which mode of belongingness does the philosopher establish his dwelling in the 'city-state', is formulated using *ymdn*, to establish his belonging-dwelling to others, who, like him, are Dasein.

<sup>2</sup> Nietzsche said 'great politics' means following a dangerous medical practice that teaches me to wait and wait but not, so far, to hope – Beyond *Good and Evil*, p.147.

way he did it the second time, can be seen in his texts, commonly known as Heidegger's turn, where he raised another essential question about ourselves: Who are We? This led him to conclude that the meaning of ourselves resides in belongingness, or, in other words, in the will of the *Volk* (people). Heidegger saw the city as essentially a site in relation to ourselves - an historical dwelling for our being and not merely a political issue.

Thus, we can see that a core change is taking place, in relation to the spatial sphere in which the human being acts: it is no longer the city depicted by the Greek term *logos*, nor is it the city of the *Millah* or that of the modern city-state, but rather, the human being acts within the "world", as understood, today, as Empire.

Meskini then proceeds to examine Heidegger's term, "being-in-world", which he calls an important, but problematic, pre-emptive attempt to signify the status of post-modernity. According to his interpretation of the term, it could be understood as an empirical dwelling beyond the classical subjectivity, on which is based the concept of national-state. Heidegger negates Dasein as subject, first, and then as citizen, in the modern meaning only, because he perceives the features of postmodern, or empirical, Man, that is, the "being-in-the world", who is post-subjectivity, post-transcendentalism and post-humanism.<sup>1</sup>

Rather than merely accepting the aesthetic or existentialist<sup>2</sup> understanding of Heidegger's Dasein, Meskini points out, that, although Heidegger established a phenomenological meaning of Dasein, this was based on its hidden, pragmatic meaning, and it is on this that we must work to gain a

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<sup>1</sup> Meskini *AL- Faylsof w Al-Empratoria*, p.52.

<sup>2</sup> Meskini, like some other Arabic Heideggerian scholars and writers, has criticised the interpretation of Heidegger which has been accepted since 1940s, as one who advocates existentialism. They believe that this interpretation fails to indigenise Heidegger's concepts, which, if tapped, would offer critical possibilities, in sense referred to by Sloterdijk : "If Sein und Zeit is read not "merely" as existential ontology, but also as an encoded social psychology of modernity, insights into structural relations open up, offering a tremendous perspective." Peter Sloterdijk, "*Critique of cynical reason*, trans., Michael Eldred (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1987), p.202.



political perspective on Man. Therefore, Meskini examines the problem of homeland through the issues of Dasein; in other words, he investigates the meaning of “unhomeliness”. He does this by asking the question: How does Dasein carry its publicness? or, alternatively, ‘How does Dasein dwell in the City or Homeland of They’?

As is common knowledge, in *Being and Time*, the only mention of “city” is to refer to the zero point of the state of entity, which is being “in” a place and “at” a place.

Both water and glass, garment and cupboard, are 'in' space and 'at' a location, and both in the same way. This relationship of being can be expanded: for instance, the bench is in the lecture-room, the lecture-room is in the university, the university is in the city, and so on until we can say that the bench is 'in world-space'.<sup>1</sup>

In this brief allusion to “city”, Heidegger establishes one of the ontological meanings of “In-hood”, one that identifies “being-in-the world” as the relationship of the Being of two entities. The city appears as Being-present-at-hand-along-with [Mitvorhandensein]. Entities can thus be described as having the same kind of Being - that of Being-present-at-hand-, as things occurring 'within' the world, or as Being-present-at-hand-with, in the sense of a definite location-relationship with something else that has the same kind of Being. These are all ontological characteristics, which philosophers term, "categorical"; they belong to entities whose kind of Being is not that which is being inquired into, when one asks the question, “Who”. This is because this question asks about Dasein, which has existential ontological characteristics<sup>2</sup>.

Meskini notes that, although Heidegger failed to mention the term *die Heimat* (homeland) in *Being and Time*, there is another term, Unheimlichkeit, which literally means “unhomeliness”, that he

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<sup>1</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time* p.79.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

does refer to 29 times. The adjectival form of this word, *unheimlich*, is derived from the German word, *die Heimat* (the homeland), but in fact, its common meaning is ‘uncanny.’ Thus, Heidegger’s usage of *Unheimlichkeit* to mean ‘unhomeliness’ draws on the origin of the word, rather than its common meaning, which is ‘uncanniness’<sup>1</sup>. What is striking in his making this connection is that Heidegger clearly raises the issue of ‘unhomeliness’: *In anxiety one feels 'uncanny'*<sup>2</sup>. In this way, he highlights the phenomenon of anxiety, as the basic state of mind of Dasein, as Being-in-the-world.

Heidegger analyses the everyday of Dasein, as it is immersed in the stage of the “they” or public person who furnishes the space of city, which, to a lesser degree is also the ‘work-world’ that is closest to him. In this work-world, along with the equipment needed for work, those others, for whom the ‘work’ is destined, are ‘encountered, too. For instance, when material is used to make something, the maker also encounters its producer or ‘supplier,’ as one who ‘serves’ well or badly. This is the non-individual They, who furnish the space of the modern city, and, so, make the Dasein a mode of everyday falling:

Thus, in characterising the encountering of others, one is again still oriented by that Dasein, which is, in each case, one’s own. But even in this characterization does one not start by marking out and isolating the ‘I’, so that one must then seek some way of getting over to the others from this isolated subject? To avoid this misunderstanding, we must notice in what sense we are talking about ‘the others’. By ‘Others’ we do not mean everyone else but me - those over against whom the “I” stands out. They are rather those from whom, for the most part, one does not distinguish oneself - those among whom one

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<sup>1</sup> Meskini, *AL- Faylsof w Al-Empratoria*, pp.55-56.

<sup>2</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 231.

is too. This Being-there-too with them does not have the ontological character of a Being-present-at-hand-along-'with' them within a world. This 'with' is something of the character of Dasein; the 'too' means a sameness of Being as circumspectively being present in the world. 'With' and 'too' are to be understood existentially, not categorically. By reason of this with-like [mithaften] Being-in-the-world, the world is always the one that I share with Others. The world of Dasein is a with-world [Mitwelt]. Being-in is Being-with Others. Their Being-in-themselves within-the-world is Dasein-with [Mitdasein].<sup>1</sup>

Meskini interprets the meaning of the They, as being far from the paradigm of consciousness, because the They, here, is not subjective or individual, in the radical sense. Rather, it encodes the significance of the modern citizen. Therefore, he calls this They, the empirical citizen, who, without centre or boundaries, emerges into the non-individual space of sovereignty. Heidegger discovered the phenomenon of 'They', through modern man; it is world consciousness, not just the common sense that unites different subjects living under the shadow of the national-state. Since the They have no borders, this gives rise to a state of absolute anxiety, which is different from fear. This difference stems from one's experience of each of these states: when we experience fear, this reveals the world in a unique way, and, in this sense, it resembles anxiety, yet remains distinct from it. 'Fear is anxiety that is fallen on the "world", inauthentic and concealed from itself as anxiety. What I fear is an entity within the world.' Heidegger's phenomenon of fear can be considered from three points of view, which are closely related: (1) that in the face of which we fear, (2) fearing, and (3) that for which we fear. The first of these refers to something that we encounter within-the-world and which may have either readiness-to-hand, such as tools or

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, pp. 154-155.

equipment (i.e. hammer, pencil, computer), presence-at-hand (snake), or Dasein-with, as its kind of Being. When I experience fear of an entity, such as an injection by a doctor, this entity is 'detrimental'. Detrimentality is its 'mode of involvement [Bewandtnisart]'. The detrimentality is of a definite kind, pain, and comes from a definite place, the doctor. This place and what comes out of it (injection) are familiar to me as sources of fear, even before the injection is administered. If I am not sure whether the injection will be needed or not, this state of uncertainty exacerbates the fear, because the possibility of being injected is close by. In this way, the second view of fear, fearing, is not just a feeling that is experienced internally; it is one that opens up a world of potential threats - the fear has already revealed the world as a realm from which fearsome entities may approach. Finally, that for which I fear is, in fact, myself, as Dasein. For example, if I fear for my possessions, I'm actually fearing for myself, as 'concernful-being-alongside. If I fear for others, I also fear for myself being-with the other, who could be torn away from me. Fear is, thus, a state of being: it discloses the world, Dasein's thrownness into it, and the involvement of entities within this state.<sup>1</sup>

Likewise, anxiety is a state one is in, but this state is different from that of fear. The thing that anxiety is about, that is its 'Before-which, In the face of which', is not entity in-the-world, but rather being in-the-world, that is, Dasein itself, or the Nothing. Unlike fear, which is an entity in-the-world, anxiety, a being in-the-world, involves no threat of harm from a definite entity, is indefinite, and lacks involvement. Hence anxiety strips the world of its involvement-totality, and its significance, making the world, as such, even more obtrusive.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, 179-180 also, M, Inwood, *Heidegger Dictionary*, (UK: Blackwell 1999), pp. 16-17.

While what is fearsome is an entity, the source of anxiety is non-identity, or factual being in-the world. Why we experience anxiety from being in-the-world is explained by Heidegger, as follows:

In anxiety, one feels 'uncanny'. Here, the peculiar indefiniteness of that which Dasein finds itself alongside in anxiety, comes proximally to the expression: the "nothing and nowhere". In anxiety, one feels 'uncanny'. But here "uncanniness" also means "not-being-at-home" [das Nichtzuhause-sein]. In our first indication of the phenomenal character of Dasein's basic state and in our clarification of the existential meaning of "Being-in" as distinguished from the categorical signification of 'insideness', Being-in was defined as "residing alongside ", "Being-familiar with This character of Being-in was then brought to view more concretely through the everyday publicness of the They", which brings tranquillized self-assurance-'Being-at-home', with all its obviousness-into the average everydayness of Dasein. On the other hand, as Dasein falls, anxiety brings it back from its absorption in the 'world'. Everyday familiarity collapses. Dasein has been individualized, but individualized as Being-in the-world. Being-in enters into the existential 'mode' of the "not-at-home". Nothing else is meant by our talk about 'uncanniness'.<sup>1</sup>

For Meskini, the world has a dual significance (1) as a place, and (2) as a non-place. The domain of Man is non-specific and free from any sense of glorification. In a word, it is 'secularized', in the literal sense of the word as used in Arabic and Latin, that is, Man is structured by the world in its worldhood. Heidegger formulated the heart of this issue through critical formulation, as Meskini writes quoting Heidegger: "That in the face of which one has anxiety [das Wovor der Angst] is Being-in-the world, as such".<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 233.

<sup>2</sup> Meskini, *AL- Faylsof w Al-Empratoria*, p. 59.

From this, anxiety can be understood as a state that is free from any detrimental (mode of involvement), because the equipment that is ready-to-hand depends on one's understanding and interpretation of it. So the world, as we know it, becomes a mode of total insignificance. Heidegger writes:

[...] anxiety does not 'see' any definite 'here' or 'yonder' from which it comes. 'Nowhere', however, does not signify nothing: this is where any region lies, and there too lies any disclosedness of the world for essentially spatial Being-in. Therefore that which threatens cannot bring itself close from a definite direction within what is close by; it is already 'there', and yet nowhere; it is so close that it is oppressive and stifles one's breath, and yet it is nowhere. In that in the face of which one has anxiety, the 'It is nothing and nowhere' becomes manifest. The obstinacy of the "nothing and nowhere within-the-world" means as a phenomenon that the world as such is that in the face of which one has anxiety. The utter insignificance which makes itself known in the "nothing and nowhere", does not signify that the world is absent, but tells us that entities within-the-world are of so little importance in themselves that on the basis of this insignificance of what is within the-world.<sup>1</sup>

According to Meskini, the critical result of anxiety is that it emancipates Dasein from the public home, returning it to naked self, or, pure Dasein. Anxiety takes Dasein from its everyday home (watan) and throws it no-where, since no-where is a state of unhomeliness. Dasein dreads the unhomeliness which lies within, so it vacillates between the dread of losing itself in the city of They, and that of being not-at-home in its being-in-the world. However, anxiety also individualises Dasein, by making it understand itself beyond its public home, because its public home is not just

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<sup>1</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 231.

a place, but also a way of interpreting itself or its behaviour<sup>1</sup>. However, for Heidegger, this result is an ontological one:

The important result of anxiety is that it takes away from Dasein the possibility of understanding itself, as it falls, in terms of the 'world' and the way things have been publicly interpreted. Anxiety throws Dasein back upon that which it is anxious about -its authentic potentiality-for-Being-in-the-world. Anxiety individualizes Dasein for its ownmost Being-in-the-world, which as something that understands, projects itself essentially upon possibilities. Therefore, with that which it is anxious about, anxiety discloses Dasein as Being-possible, and indeed as the only kind of thing which it can be of its own accord as something individualized in individualization. Anxiety makes manifest in Dasein its Being towards its ownmost potentiality-for-Being-that is, its Being-free for the freedom of choosing itself and taking hold of itself. Anxiety brings Dasein face to face with its Being free for the authenticity of its Being, and for this authenticity as a possibility which it always is. But at the same time, this is the Being to which Dasein as Being-in-the-world has been delivered over<sup>2</sup>.

Here, empirical anxiety reveals its true face as Being-possible, that is, as an extreme unhomeliness of nothing, or what Heidegger called, precisely, "Being-towards-death":

Thrownness into death reveals itself to Dasein in a more primordial and impressive manner in that state-of-mind which we have called "anxiety". Anxiety in the face of death is anxiety 'in the face of' that potentiality-for-Being which is one's ownmost, non-relational, and not

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<sup>1</sup> Meskini, *AL- Faylsof w Al-Empratoria*, p.61.

<sup>2</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp.232-233.

to be outstripped that in the face of which one has anxiety is Being-in-the-world itself. That about which one has this anxiety is simply Dasein's potentiality-for-Being.<sup>1</sup>

Meskini interprets Being-towards-death as a modern spiritual phenomenon, rather than simply an existential problem. This mode of existence, which was created by the industry of death, as exemplified by World War I, is not merely a personal attribute, but an encoding of the expression of an unprecedented kind of death. This death is meta-personal, and is caused by the systematic production of cadavers as a technical goal and teleological activity carried out by institutions. Neither is anxiety just a literary problem; it is also a political concept, in the primordial sense of the word: the experience of a world war inspired Heidegger to derive the being-in-the-world of Dasein from the meaning of anxiety as, essentially, unhomeliness (Unheimlichkeit). According to Meskini, this anxiety dreads technological death, and is not a state of the bourgeois, as described in the writings of György Lukács, Theodore W. Adorno, Pierre Bourdieu, and Jürgen Habermas. In seeking the authenticity of its being, Dasein is also resisting the predominance of the They. Thus, unhomeliness (not at-home) is not just a transitory phenomenon, but rather a basic state-of-mind, and more primordial than familiar. Unhomeliness brings Dasein back from its everyday falling, and shows that authenticity and inauthenticity are possibilities of its Being<sup>2</sup>.

Meskini points out that early Heidegger revealed the public or everyday home/homeland through the existential question, 'Who is Dasein', which includes three related issues:

1. "I" am "Myself", in the sense of Being of Self;
2. I am "with" otherness, in the sense of Being-with ;.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 295.

<sup>2</sup> Meskini, *AL- Faylsof w Al-Empratoria*, p. 61.



### 3. The phenomenon of the “They”, and the everyday Being-one's-Self.

The rule of the phenomenon of anxiety, according to Heidegger, is equal to that of the phenomenon of wonder, which was a condition of philosophising in the Greek era. However, according to Meskini, when the later Heidegger ceased his existential introspection of Dasein, from the point of view of unhomelessness, he began to create the meaning of Homeland through the historical question, ‘Who are We’<sup>1</sup>.

Heidegger said:

We tried then another way, namely, from out of the moment. We said: We are here, admitted into the happening of education of this university and, with this, fitted into the vocation, which we willed with its professional tasks, [and] with this, fitted into the order and the willing of a State. We are here, fitted into this happening today, we are here in the belongingness to this Volk, we are this Volk itself. <sup>2</sup>

It seems that our self-being is the Volk. So, this answer to the question suggests that We is meaningless only when we submit ourselves (*fügten uns*) in the moment. This is the basis of the people (Volk) in a social sector, such as education. In this way, we have carried out an entirely different determination of Volk.

With the sentence, “We are here,” involved in a happening of Volk, something is achieved. Each one of us, we ourselves, are simply subordinate to the demands to submit ourselves to the power of a will, to stand together with our will [mit Willen mitstehn]. Thus, whether we make a decision to do something, or whether we decide not to do it, or even if we are undecided and simply let

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 62.

<sup>2</sup> Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p.50.

others carry us along in their decision-making, we exist by way of a series of decisions; We are in authentic ways just decisions. It must be noted that a decision does not move the individual back to the ego, but opens him out toward self-Dasein. In willing to be he, himself, he is sent out precisely beyond himself into the belongingness to which he submits himself in the decision. In other words, belongingness arises by a willing of decision. In the decision, each is separated from the others, as only human beings can be separated. This happens in any decision, even in one such as friendship, which is a social decision<sup>1</sup>.

Meskini asserts that this We, to which we submit ourselves in a decision, is a radical state of friendship. This type of friendship, which is based on essential belongingness, could be more ethical than justice, in the context of the governance of a city. It was Aristotle who drew attention to this significant fact at the very start of book VIII of the *Nicomachean Ethics*:

It also seems that friendship holds cities together and that legislators take it more seriously than justice. For concord seems to be something like friendship, and this is what they seek most, whereas faction, because it is enmity, they most seek to drive out. Also, if people are friends, there is no need for justice, whereas people who are just, need friendship in addition to justice. Also, of just things the most just of all seem to be fitted to friendship.<sup>2</sup>

*Very likely with Aristotle in mind, Heidegger writes:*

The decision does not move the individual back up to the I, but broadens him toward self-Dasein in education. In willing to be he himself, he is sent out precisely beyond himself into the belongingness to which he submits himself in the decision. In the decision, each is separated from each in such a way as only a human being can be separated. That is so in

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, pp. 50-51.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, *the Nicomachean Ethics*, trans., C. D. C. Reeve, (USA , Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. 2014), p.136.

any decision, even in a decision that concerns solely a community, for example, forging a friendship. This decision as well distances those who have decided as far as only a distance can possibly be. Such relations are not in any case grounded in external nearness, so that those who are dependent, who snuggle up to another, would be those suitable friendship. Friendship grows only out of the greatest possible inner independence of each individual, which is evidently something completely different from egoism. In spite of the separation after the manner of decision of the individual, a concealed unison carries itself out here, whose connectedness is an essential one. This unison is fundamentally always a mystery.<sup>1</sup>

However, where can we find this kind of relationship, which is established on primordial belongingness? In other words, is there any place where we are or in which we make ourselves happen, since any decision, especially in regard to the Volk, happens through and inside somewhere in history. Heidegger said:

One translates polis as state (Staat) and city-state (Stadtstaat); this does not capture the entire sense. Rather, polis is the name for the site (Stätte), the Here, within which and as which Being-here is historically. The polis is the site of history, the Here, in which, out of which and for which history happens. To this site of history belong the gods, the temples, the priests, the celebrations, the games, the poets, the thinkers, the ruler, the council of elders, the assembly of the people, the armed forces, and the ships. All this does not first belong to the polis, is not first political, because it enters into a relation with a statesman and a general and with the affairs of state. Instead, what we have named is political—that is, at the site of history—insofar as, for example, the poets are only poets, but then are actually poets the thinkers are only thinkers, but then are actually thinkers, the priests are only

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<sup>1</sup> Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, pp. 51-52.

priests, but then are actually priests, the rulers are only rulers, but then are actually rulers. Are- but this says: use violence as violence-doers and become those who rise high in historical Being as creators, as doers. Rising high in the site of history, they also become a polis, without city and site, lonesome, un-canny, with no way out amidst beings as a whole, and at the same time without ordinance and limit, without structure and fittingness (Fug), because they as creators must first ground all this in each case.<sup>1</sup>

The city is the dwelling of belongingness (radical friendship), rather than just a site located in history, with meaningless architecture. When human beings are radically located in this place, they pose a danger to the city, because, according to Heidegger, the human being, in his essence, rising high in the site of history, also become apolis, without city and site.”<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, in the context of the ancient Greeks, the Volk found their way into the overwhelming in which they found themselves, which is the violence of those who act in this way. The 'themselves', according to what has been said, means those who at once break forth and break up, capture and subjugate.

This breaking-forth, breaking-up, capturing and subjugating is in itself the first opening of beings as sea, as earth, as animal. A breaking-forth and breaking-up happen only insofar as the powers of language, of understanding, of mood, and of building, are themselves surmounted in doing violence.<sup>3</sup>

For when human beings are everywhere and underway, in this sense, their having no way out does not arise from the presence of some outward restriction that will not allow them to go any farther,

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<sup>1</sup>Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p.162, p. 163.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p.163.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p.167.

for, in fact, they can always go farther into the etcetera. This not having a way out comes from their being continually thrown back on the paths that they themselves laid out; they get bogged down, stuck in ruts, and by getting stuck, they draw in the circle of their world, get enmeshed in seeming, and thus, shut themselves out of Being. They can turn every skill to the place where it is best applied.<sup>1</sup>

Hence, the virtual city, which is one of entity, numbers, information and machines, make Man lose himself and fall into a state of Homelessness. This Homelessness is the abandonment of beings by Being, and is beginning to be the destiny of the world. Thus, it is necessary to think of destiny in terms of the history of Being

Heidegger rejected any kind of liberal perception of cosmopolitanism. According to him, it is just a trend of humanism, which has no radical vision of the fate of the world or the "homeland." This word, "homeland" is used, here, in its essential meaning, that is, not patriotically or nationalistically, but in the sense of the history of Being. This concept of homeland, is also mentioned, in order to call our attention to the homelessness of the contemporary human being, in relation to his essence in history. Any meaning of homeland throughout history, including the one in the modern era, which equates state with homeland, and homeland with nation, is rejected by Heidegger.

In the face of the essential homelessness of human beings, the approaching destiny of the human being reveals itself to thought on the history of being in this, that the human being find his way into the truth of being and set out on this find. Every nationalism is metaphysically an anthropologism, and as such subjectivism. Nationalism is not overcome

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p.168.

through mere internationalism; it is rather expanded and elevated thereby into a system. Nationalism is as little brought and raised to humanitas by internationalism as individualism is by an ahistorical collectivism. The latter is the subjectivity of human beings in totality. It completes subjectivity's unconditioned self-assertion, which refuses to yield. Nor can it be even adequately experienced by a thinking that mediates in a one-sided fashion. Expelled from the truth of being, the human being everywhere circles around himself as the animal rationale [...] Homeland of this historical dwelling is nearness to being.

The human being is not the lord of beings. The human being is the shepherd of being.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the authentic meaning of homeland/home is the guardianship of Being, rather than the domination of beings. In this sense, the homeland is a fertile tool, which turned thinking about political issues away from the concept of domination, which established national-states, towards one of guardianship. This latter concept is an important one for reflecting on the world as a City of Being. However, currently, Man has managed to create only a global village; this is perhaps the last phase of sovereignty over entity (being).

From Heidegger's writings, we know that the question of what the human being is, was a Greek innovation. This came about, as a result of the Greek interpretation of Being, as *Ousia* [ουσία]. Heidegger's interpretation of this Greek concept was "present-at-hand". Thus, the question about the human being shifted, from what-questioning to who-questioning - an escape from the perspective of present-at-hand, to one of self (Selbst), in time. However, this change, demanded by the modern world, was not complete; Descartes was the first philosopher to work on this shift, but he understood 'self' as the subject. Heidegger believed that modern subjectivity, the equivalent of the Greek, *υποκείμενα*, was just a new formulation of *Ousia*. Therefore, according to Meskini,

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<sup>1</sup> Heidegger, *Pathmark*, p. 260.

in *Being and Time*, the most decisive hermeneutic act is to find a new way of revealing the meaning of ‘self’, one that goes beyond the present-at-hand, to the perception of Time. This new way will help us to construct an understanding of modernity, by revealing what is involved in precise questioning about the state of our being, in time. In particular, we will gain a new understanding of the meaning of ‘We’, that is, our identity, which until now, has been based on the concept of *Millah*<sup>1</sup>.

Heidegger’s questions about the essence of the human being, which changed from What-questioning to Who-questioning, led Meskini to investigate the meaning of *huwiyya* (who are We?), in the Islamic-Arabic context, as selfhood (traditionally, it had referred to identity or subjectivity). Achieving this shift in questioning required a special undertaking: an investigation of the phenomenological hermeneutics of the meaning of We, which had been established historically. The meaning of ‘City’ was established by recent religious jurisprudential thinking, as ‘spiritual village’. Therefore, Meskini’s task was to disclose the ‘We’ that is unseen.

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<sup>1</sup> Meskini, *Al-Huwiyya wa Al-zaman*, p.36.

## Third chapter: Identity and Temporality

### I. What is time? Phenomenological Prolegomena to the Question of “the We”

For Meskini, this research is a matter of examining the question, “What is time?”, which Heidegger put forward at the conclusion of his 1924 lecture, entitled, “Concept of Time”.

Let us disregard the answer and repeat the question. What happened to the question? It has transformed itself. What is time? became the question: Who is time? More closely: are we ourselves time? Or closer still: am I my time? In this way I come closest to it, and if I understand the question correctly, it is then taken completely seriously. Such questioning is thus the most appropriate manner of access to and of dealing with time as in each case mine. Then Dasein would be: being questionable<sup>1</sup>.

The question was again revisited by Heidegger, in 1927, but, this time, his approach was different. Rather than introducing a Heideggerian answer to the question, Meskini’s purpose is an attempt to firstly examine the question from a non-Western intellectual perspective. “Who is Time?” is, therefore, a question that Meskini addresses as one that is concerned with the nature of the relationship between subjectivity, and modernity in contemporary Arab thought. “Who is time?” might then mean: “What is the mode of temporal existence of the “We-that-is-ours?” However, it could also mean: “What are the characteristics of the Arab-Islamic Dasein today? (In so far as Dasein is understood in its special meaning given by Heidegger, i.e. temporality<sup>2</sup>).

It is Meskini’s intent, then, to derive from Heidegger's experience some of the possibilities which allow this same question to be re-examined by a different questioner, who is us. He says that any

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Heidegger, *the Concept of Time*, trans., William McNeill, (USA: Blackwell, 1992), p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Meskini, *Al-Huwiyya wa Al-zaman*, p.27.



confusion or ambiguity that this invokes is intentional, as his purpose is to awaken the confusion, both of the questioner and the questioned-about, as an essential entry into ourselves.

So, this then raises the question of Who the questioner of "What is Time?" is, today. The answer to this is not easy, for the "Who-question" has not yet been subjected to radical scrutiny. There are those who still insist on the status of the "We", outside the question, from which we draw our historical potential. According to Meskini, "Who are we?" is a question that has not yet been seriously raised in the Islamic-Arabic context, because of its overly inherent submission to the traditional answer, that is, the one provided by *Millah* (religious community), which is based on the Quran, that portrays Man, ontologically as "Created." In fact, there had been no serious attempt to change this traditional view until the time of Avicenna, who took the novel approach of "I-ness" without going as far as the post-Cartesian stage (phase), where the problem of subjectivity arises. In other words, he derived the meaning of Being from the certain Self, and made that the basis for an interpretation of Metaphysics. Thus, in the Islamic-Arabic context, there has been at least one serious attempt to liberate the idea of Man from the Quranic understanding of Man as a Creation; all others have only taken the form of simple comments and responses<sup>1</sup>.

Perhaps the wide-spread acceptance, within the Islamic-Arabic world, of the traditional answer provided by *Millah*, has now made Arabic thinkers ill-equipped to carry out any universal philosophical tasks. However, the absence of the question, "Who are we?" would not mean that the reality of the "We" as it is, that is, in its pure facticity, is also absent.

Arabic thinkers have been alienated from the question, "Who are we?", because they have a sense of nostalgic longing for the traditional answer. However, it seems that this state of nostalgia is no

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<sup>1</sup> Meskini, p. 28.

longer on the horizon for "*Millah*"; nothing of it remains but the bare fact of the "We". Thus, all acts of philosophising about the reality of the "We" are threatened by the possibility of it being displaced by modern "subjectivity". According to Meskini, this shock of displacement should not cause the "We" to return to its traditional identity<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, these issues concerning the "We" must be pushed to the very limits, even though there are no guarantees of an answer.

Undoubtedly, this is a risky task, because thinking for ourselves is dangerous. However, the risk is timely. When a thought occurs to us - in *Arabic*, *Khatar*, the liability or exposure to harm or risk is very real - we enter a dangerous place in the real sense.

Hence, the following discussion is divided into three sections:

First, who is the questioner, today, who is asking, "What is time?". Second, in what way is the question, "Who are we?", a radical reconstruction of the question, "Who is time?", and, third, if time is nothing but simply our Being, what is, today, our potential model of time? In other words, "Are we modernist or just contemporaneous<sup>2</sup>?"

#### 1. Who is the questioner asking, "What is Time?"

"Who is time?" is normally a question that would confuse the listener, as they are expecting to hear the question, "What is time?". With this in mind, it is possibly better to ask a question that is, at the same time, less confusing, in terms of ordinary questions, but more obscure, in the case of the questioned-about, that is, "Who is the questioner, today, who asks about the meaning of time?" For behind each question about time, there lies a questioner. Thus, "Who is the questioner?" is a

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<sup>1</sup> Kant said, 'Any empty wish that we could annihilate the time between our desire and our acquisition of what we desire is longing'. Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans., Mary. J. Gregor, (Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague 1974), p. 251.

<sup>2</sup> Meskini, *Al-Huwiyya wa Al-zaman*, p.29.

phrase that might mean, here, "Who asks, today, about the meaning of time?" This is because, in two different contexts, there is not a common meaning when the question, "What is time?" is raised.

A questioner is "one who thinks". However, this definition ignores who the questioner is and focusses, instead, as in the tradition, on the "what-it-is". This is because we barely understand the phrase, "he who thinks", in terms of the concept. Tradition is based on the idea that the one who thinks is the one who engages in concepts. However, a concept is just the final destination of the traditional answer to the question, "What is it?" The questioner is the one who thinks, with the "who", here, being the critical word, and not the verb, "thinks". Thinking is nothing but one of the possibilities of the who, not its fundamental definition. What, then, is the meaning of "who" without thinking? Let us say then that the question, "Who is the questioner?", refers to the source of the question, not to what it is. The source of the question is not the same as that of thought; rather it is that mysterious region from which all our questions come fourth. Such a region is what the word "who?" refers to and what we have been accustomed, for ages, to refer to as "We".

The questioner would then exist in our mode of being, and that is what the word "who?" refers to in its radical form. It is in this delicate context that we should formulate philosophical questions: we should philosophise along the lines of our mode of being.

It is now clearer that the temporary question, "Who is the questioner of the meaning of time?" functions as a prelude to our fundamental question, "Who is time?". There is still much work to be done to change the understanding of the "We" from its traditional answer, namely the one introduced by *Millah*. Indeed, the "We", whether religious or ethnic, is derived from the region of

the “We” and from the horizon of the “Who”, as referred to in its primordial possibility.<sup>1</sup>

Today, Meskini contends that all patterns of thinking still confuse the issue of “We” with the various ways of answering the question, ‘Who are we?’. Because of this, in the Arabic world, there has been a return to the nostalgic position of *Millah*. Those who resort to this traditional way of thinking have forgotten that *Millah*, as such, is just one type of answer, rather than the definitive answer concerning ourselves. This does not necessarily mean that this type of answer was initially wrong, or that the question is no longer relevant. Rather, what it does mean is that “We” requires a contemporary way of questioning it and a new way of finding the answer. Each age has had its own way of understanding human beings, so we should firstly historicise the meaning of “We”. For example, Al-Farabi historicised the answer to this question of who we are, as *Millah*. This thinking reflected the context of Plato’s question about the essence of the City-State, in terms of its problems, within traditional politics. Meskini notes that it is interesting that in Al-Farabi’s thesis, he speaks about philosophical and *Millah* issues, as opposed to the philosophical and civil issues discussed by Plato. Today, the problem is how to change the thinking from *Millah* and city-state to that of homeland and historical era, without changing the meaning of the question concerning who we are<sup>2</sup>.

As mentioned previously, there is always an inherent risk in questioning: every type of understanding of the “We” could quickly turn by itself into an “identity”, removed from the reality of the real ‘We’, and so obscure the radical horizon of the “Who”. Therefore, whoever philosophises is called upon, firstly, to resume the search for the unknown path towards the region of the “We”, whose basic features have long been obscured by the *Millah*. Thinking about the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, pp. 30-31.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 32.

“We” might also seem to be an urgent attempt to redress a kind of obscured companionship. The fundamental meaning of the “We” is what we express by "homeland", but without engaging in any nostalgic questioning about the issue of homeland, for this is not a longing for place, but, rather, a primordial dwelling in the possibility of the world, which is in our possession at all times.

Attention now turns to the second part of the investigation, that is, the attempt to answer the following question: in what radical way does the question "Who are we?" mean “Who is time?”

## 2. Time and the “We”, or Temporality and Modernity

"What is homeland?" has not yet become a philosophical question for us, that is, it has not yet been rendered a radical question about the mode of care in the world that is ours. As for the primordial and temporary meaning that is at stake from now on, it is this: homeland is a present-day mode that refers to the region of the “We” that is always ours. However, the present-dayness is not the only possibility for this homeland. Let us say that homeland is a radical sort of present-day possibility, as our mode of being. That is to say, the “We” is not *Millah*, and it should not be so; it is a present-day possibility that homeland is nothing other than one of its initial, and perhaps temporary, meanings. Homeland is the mode of care for the present-dayness that is ours. We, then, do not exist "in" present-dayness, but rather, we *are* its structure; we *are* the mere present-dayness. So, what we start to see now is that the “We” is a temporal possibility, not an actual consciousness.

The questioner of "What is time?" would not ask only in so far as he endures his present-day, or its own mode of the being of “We” that is his, in terms of the radical sort of care for the homeland. We think, only from within, to the extent to which we manage to understand one of the meanings of the homeland. The meaning of the homeland was not, until now, other than a lazy spirit in a certain culture, and, in this case, the homeland is always a difficult invention for a possibility of

the world. However, what is the possibility of the world? It is nothing other than that which we refer to as the "era": the era is always the horizon of the present-day from which the region of the "We" brings forth its own mode of being.

It is in this context that we should invoke the call for "modernity" inside us. However, we might encounter, here, an issue that proves increasingly difficult as long as our questioning of the "West" remains emotional. For not only is there a synchronised merging of parallel terminology between the West and Modernity, but there is also a radical marrying of them, which we do not currently seem prepared to contemplate, because of the overly strong appeal of the model of *Millah*<sup>1</sup>.

Meskini assumes that we can go a significantly long way towards the question concerning the dualism of the West and modernity if we look at it from the angle of dualism of homeland and era, rather than from that of the Self and Other. Meskini says that to begin with, the "West" is a mode of "We", whose novelty is that it has successfully turned into a mode of human being, in general. The novelty of the West is that it has no longer seen itself as a *Millah*, for at least a century. This means that, so far, the West has succeeded while other cultures have failed in constructing a possibility for a world driven by a sort of "basic humanism."

This basic humanism, as such, is considered an alternative to the horizon of *Millah*. To put it more precisely, on the horizon of this basic humanism, the West has fought a battle to irrevocably reconstruct the meaning of the homeland. In the midst of this issue of the homeland, Meskini instructs us to contemplate modernity. Indeed, modernity is a specific "era," but it has also become the Western vision of a homeland. Modernity is an "era," whose novelty is that it has become a radical mode of the homeland, with *Millah* being unable to resist it any longer.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 34.

That is to say, given our question on time, Modernity is the era in which humanity, for the first time, looked at itself as "Time". Today, the West is the basic horizon for this humanity, and this means that it, to some extent, provides present humanity with a mode of caring for the world, that is, the mode of assuming a sense of homeland. The West, in its radical sense, is an "era" and not a "*Millah*". However, for this reason in particular, it imposes on us an alien face of homeland. The West is a mode of being in this era, a mode of general caring for homeland. If homeland is a public dwelling place for humanity, away from the possibility of the world that it owns, then the plan of modernity is this: it is an attempt to transition to a radical "era" for all<sup>1</sup>.

Meskini says that the novelty of the West is that it has invented a novel meaning for homeland, the strength of which is no longer derived from any traditional spiritual source, but, rather, is derived from time. The meaning of homeland is the era. This is a curious fact in the history of humanity. We belong today to the era, rather than to any *Millah*. The difference between these two is like that between the "space of experience" that no longer supplies the "We" with its present-day possibilities, and the "horizon of waiting" that has become the sole source of the continuity of the "We". Modernity means nothing more than the "growing disparity" between that space and that horizon. Meskini questions whether homeland is not something other than a basic horizon of waiting for the emergence of the meaning of Man.

Therefore, whoever philosophises outside the Western horizon of present-day humanity is one who already calls upon himself to be a part of a sort of world citizenry, which we do not seem to have the philosophical competence to invoke. However, while philosophising was, in a sense, an era-caring model of the ultimate meaning of homeland, it was never meant to be a model of caring for

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 35.

the West. Indeed, the West is the present-day horizon of humanity, but it is not its sole "contemporary". Contemporaneity is the radical technique of resistance to a single meaning of era, which means that it is the residual technique of homeland for caring for the world, in the region of the "We" that is ours.

Meskini's statement, "Homeland is the era", is an acknowledgment that time has become the radical context of the present-day dwelling in the world. He maintains that we should stop questioning time in terms of "what-questioning?", since this sort of question asks only about what time is, that is, whether it is this or that entity. The time that matters to us is not an object; it is a mode of the existence of being that we have always had. We have always been in some time, our time, that is, we are the mode of our being, in an era which acts as the ultimate meaning of the homeland that is ours.

However, since the question, "Who are we?" is still, for us, far too ethnic and far too religious, Meskini maintains that it demands long and arduous work before it is rendered philosophical. "Who are we?" might mean, here, "Who is the time that is 'We'?", since if the era is today, the basic meaning of the homeland, the meaning of our existence, is then nothing but temporal. What, then, is the meaning of *al zaman* (time)? The Arabic phrase *zamina al mar'* means a person who has "*al zamanah*," that is, "severe disability", but *al zamanah* may also mean "love"! *Al zameen* (the disabled person) is the person with *al zamanah*. Thus, we are temporal, that is, we are infected with time. Meskini proposes that time is a type of radical condition, that is, it is a mode of being, similar to a disease or illness, but it is also something else, as it can also be a sort of excessive love. He suggests that we address time as an essential "affect" that makes our mode of being temporal. He adds that this implicit context was perhaps one of the hidden realms behind the



ancient Arabs' tendency to apprehend and subvert time<sup>1</sup>.

According to Meskini, the fear of time is almost an anthropological characteristic of the Arabic context, although the contemplation of it has never gone beyond moral observations. He questions why time has remained on the spiritual horizon of Arabs, seen always from the viewpoint of that which threatens them all, simultaneously - even at times when Arabs have been guiding the course of humanity. Meskini believes that the Arabic culture has never succeeded in inventing a positive concept of time, but adds that one day, that situation must be overcome - by asking, "Who is the time that we are?"

In the Islamic-Arabic context, there is a constant tendency to "deprecate" Time, which is seen as a state of primordial perception that was buried by the Quranic event. This tendency is called "Dahriyya". Meskini assumes that this understanding of Time as Dahriyya is a nihilist one that is related to the pre-Islamic-Arabic context. For Meskini, this perception involves important issues related to the Being of beings, rather than being just a tendency of atheism or materialism. According to him, when the Quran says: "They say there is nothing but 'the life of this world'" (present or nearest life): we die and we live and only '*dahr*' (time) destroys us"<sup>2</sup>, this view, that is, that the meaning of being of Man is just this "nearest life", (nearness) was the view of pagans. This nearness is an extreme state of present, and for each state of present, the limit, or death, that is, 'the possibility of no-longer being-able-to-be-there' is imposed by *dahr* - Time as the destroyer. Meskini notes that instead of establishing a positive meaning of time, that is, one which makes the meaning of present life possible, these pre-Islamic-Arabic peoples, by questioning the temporality of nearness provided by their experience of being, came up with the concept of *dahr*, which

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pp. 37-38.

perceives time as a destroyer. This concept is a nihilist position, in the sense that it inhibits the promotion of life. However, according to Meskini, if *Dahriyya* is examined from the modern viewpoint, two things are evident: first, the meaning of Being of beings is revealed only in the mode of nearness, that is, the present, or nearest life is Being, whose meaning becomes clear by nearness; and, second, the primordial essence of the human being is a finite one, that is, it is finite in the context of the ordinary understanding of time as the end of the human being. This acknowledged the great strides that had been taken by the pre-Islamic-Arabic people in developing their understanding of 'finite' to the point where they saw it as something that becomes part of human existence through time. Meskini assumes that the understanding of time as "dahr", as discussed in the Quran, is a pre-ontological draft that displays the meaning of Being, in the same way that it is presented in the Mu'allaqat a (group of seven long Arabic poems)<sup>1</sup>.

This radical change in the meaning of being, from 'dahr' to the assumption of creation as explained in the Quran, precluded any attempts at understanding Time. In fact, Islamic tradition tried to suppress this constant tendency to "deprecate" Time, by identifying God with 'dahr'. Muhammad is reported to have said that God commanded Men not to blame *dahr*, "for I am *dahr*". This suggests that he is equating the idea of 'dahr', or what makes Men finite, with God. That is, it is not Time that makes human beings finite, but God<sup>2</sup>.

Meskini is of the opinion that the idea of Time, in the Abrahamic religions, is accompanied by the perception of Man as "created, originated". The term 'created' is a temporal term: what is "created" is "temporally created", or "co-originated" ('muḥdat'), in time. Therefore, the theological insistence, in the Arabic-Islamic context, on the view of Man as created, which even now is

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani, *Fath al-Bari*, Vol. 10., (Beirut: Dar El Marefah, 1959-1960) , p. 564.

common, is the result of this idea of the human being as existing in Time. This creatural concept is a theological one which signifies philosophical 'finiteness', but the danger that it poses is that it prevents Man from understanding both his own being and the being of the We, through the Self. The We is in its primordial ontological mode, not its ontic state, which is the being-at-hand derived from the transcendent creator, or originator. The Created is not an actual being-in-the world, except in the sense of its potential to exist. Meskini believes that the major asset of modernity is its ability to change the meaning of 'human being' from the created to the subject. What follows then is a change in the perception of Time: Time is no longer a state of non-being surrounding the human being, which establishes his creatural being, but, rather, it is a primordial ontological possibility of We to choose what we want to be. According to Heidegger,

[It is], not that "time is," but "Dasein qua time temporalizes its being". Time is not something which is found outside somewhere as a framework for world events. Time is even less something which whirs away inside in consciousness. It is rather that which makes possible the being-of-itself-in-already-being-involved-in, that is, which makes possible the being of care."<sup>1</sup>

Enmity to time has long been a philosophical concern in the Arab context, and the Arab thinking about time has not progressed beyond moral comments. Even at the height of their intellectual glory, Arabs still failed to invent positive ways of thinking about time.<sup>2</sup>

According to Meskini, time, in its original sense of *al zamanah* (disability), means that the region of "We", today, is not temporal, that is, it does not produce its own time, except in so far as it is

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time*, trans., T. Kisiel, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1985), pp. 319-320.

<sup>2</sup> Meskini, *Al-Huwiyya wa Al-zaman*, pp. 37-38.

obsolete or chronical; rather, it is infected from the outside, as if by a chronic disease. However, Meskini questions the nature of this sincerity that has struck the region of *Millah*, and then become obsolete. The response of *Millah* was that this acute folly is modernity. In the context of this ambiguity, Muhammad Abduh's choice of the title, "Al-Radd 'ala al-Dahriyyi" (The Refutation of Eternity), as the Arabic translation of a Persian work by al-Afghānī, suggests that modernity is a kind of eternity, that is, a kind of sincerity that has afflicted the region of the "We".

Now, to attempt to answer the last question of this research, namely: "Is the "We" simply modern or is it contemporary?"

### 3. Is the "We" modern or contemporary?

Meskini holds that the answer to this is not easy, as perhaps it is a question that transcends the horizon of the present-day generation. However, since philosophising derives its greatest potential from such a question, he believes that we are called upon to commence exploring, in advance, the primordial possibilities of the question. What is primordial is that the "We" in our possession does not mean, in its daily dimension, more than the fact that we exist in the "same natural time" as the West. However, he questions whether or not modernity is a natural time that can be measured by a watch or clock. Meskini asserts that what is needed, here, is a decisive definition of "modern," so that the mode of time from which it springs is revealed. As noted previously, Meskini believes that modernity is a critical mode of "era", and that it is time to query the birth and nature of this era. According to him, the term "modern times" is still used today in the same way as it was in the time of Descartes. However, only since Nietzsche has a modern meaning of modernity become possible. This is because, at this time, a fundamental change occurred in humanity's consciousness of itself, and this led to the emergence of the intense questioning of the meaning of "modernity". Meskini notes that the striking coincidence that has occurred at the exact same time as the concept

of "the West" itself, was also being questioned. However, he asserts that the roots of this change were never a nineteenth-century manifestation; rather they dated back to at least two centuries before<sup>1</sup>.

At this juncture, Meskini gives an overview of the general movement of change in the hermeneutical position of thought in the West, over the last few centuries. He describes this in terms of two critical turning points: the first is the reinterpretation of the essence of a human being, as a subjectivity, in the context of a sort of fundamental humanism that navigates within the phenomenon of the Enlightenment; the second is the departure from the paradigm of consciousness and its involvement in reinterpreting the era as modernity. The latter includes two alternatives: the horizon of a basic historiology, or the horizon of the paradigm of language, in the sense of basic positivism. These are the two horizons that, today, simultaneously, find their own expression in the current phenomenon of globalisation.

In examining these changes, Meskini assumes that the "We" which is in our possession is already required to overcome two fundamental challenges before it can hope for the prospect of an authentic future. As discussed earlier, these challenges are signs of two critical phases of the present-day movement of humanity itself, as programmed by the West: first, the extent of its ability to engage in the interpretation of Man as subject/Self, which also means, successfully draw a political horizon for basic humanism in an irreversible manner; and, second, the extent of humanity's ability to interpret the era as modernity, which also means successfully drawing a spiritual horizon for basic historiology or basic positivism, in an irreversible manner<sup>2</sup>.

The West has only these two challenges, as fundamental horizons from which present-day

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, pp. 38-39.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 39.

humanity cannot turn away. In this critical context, Meskini says that we should raise the question, "Who is the time that "We" are?". In other words, he is asking what the "We" that we have today, could mean to the present world. Since this "We" does not know the phenomena of subjectivity nor humanism, it is not founded on the mode of truth as "certainty", and, so, does not meet the demands of the "Cosmos". Likewise, since it is not grounded on the phenomena of historiography and positivism, it is not based on the requirement of "secularisation", and, therefore, does not meet the demands of "globalisation<sup>1</sup>."

However, Meskini goes on to say that this does not mean that the "We" exists outside of time, for we can, and should, historicise the nature of the relationship between the "We" and these variables. Because, since the early nineteenth century, the "We", as such, has entered into direct association with the results of the historiographical turn, particularly that of colonialism, the, "We", today, seems to be a series of separate cultural facts that have yet to be hermeneutically interpreted. These facts lead to the authentic guiding horizon. Likewise, Meskini says that since today the "We" is affected by the consequences of the linguistic turn and those of globalisation, it has become a spiritual reality which owns nothing but its own facticity. Today, according to Meskini, we are a fragile spiritual reality, and any radical problematic, whatever it may be, could result in its being profoundly disrupted.

Meskini then returns to the question of whether we are modernist or contemporaneous. He believes that at least one of the possible fundamental interpretations of this question is becoming clear to us, that is, the possibility of re-raising the question in a less exacting manner, such as this: if the issue of modernity means nothing more than diligently engaging with the paradigms of history and

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 40.

language, at the same time, so as to preserve the meaning of the world, how can the “We” that is ours examine the paradigms of history and language genuinely, that is, internally and irreversibly? However, as he notes, this presupposes that the “We” should have already considered a previous question, namely: how could the “We” examine, initially, the paradigm of consciousness, both internally and irreversibly?

According to Meskini, the answer to the question of whether we are modernist or contemporaneous is this: we are not modernist, for our own region of the “We” does not arise from any basic structure of modernity. Perhaps this is because it has not engaged in any fundamental struggle with the traditional theory of knowledge or with its supporting paradigm of consciousness.

Thus, the answer is that we are contemporaneous. Meskini then examines the meaning of the adjective "contemporary". In Arabic, it is *muasarah*, and is derived from the verb *mofa'alah*, which designates participation and augmentation, and, even pluralism, if the verb takes the measure of the verb *al if'aal* . "Contemporary", therefore, basically denotes participation in the era.. We, therefore, share with the West the actual era, augmenting and accommodating it. However, says Meskini, this is not an adequate indication that we are modernist, but, rather, it raises the question of whether contemporaneity is embedded in modernity. He proposes the possibility of disclosing the present-day issue of the “We” that is ours, whose own task derives from contemporaneity. He adds that we have to ask ourselves in what sense we can more authentically undertake the task of Contemporaneity which belongs to us. “Contemporaneity” might mean nothing more than a unique way of examining the potentiality of the phenomenon that is modernity, that is, the potentiality of a radical historiological plan that the West has imposed on present-day humanity<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p.42.

Meskini states that every fundamentalist thought secretly assumes the possibility of disengagement from the era, so as to move beyond the current horizon of humanity. Until now, this assumption has succeeded only in transforming the relationship between these fundamentalist thoughts and the phenomenon of modernity, into a hybrid form of nihilism, which finds its historical expression in the recent phenomenon of terrorism. For this reason, philosophers must work on the essential task of enquiring about the meaning of Being, which is the “We” that exists in a world which no longer draws its structure from the region of the former “We” that was in our possession. Meskini believes that the risk to our thinking, today, is our failure to construct a positive concept of time due to our nostalgia for the past, that is, by relieving ourselves of the plight of the contemporaneous. This course of action is the typical technique of any current or future fundamentalism. However, since returning to the past - that is, beyond historiology and positivism that guide present-day humanity - is only possible by the adoption of an anti-West sentiment, every type of fundamentalism is doomed to borrow its existence from the facticity of the West<sup>1</sup>.

After the failure of the project of modernity in the Arab context, which seemed for them just a sign of the Other, and not of the era, what is the new horizon which humans seek?

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, pp.42-43.



## II. Towards an alternative Modernity or the Other of Modernity

According to Meskini, although philosophers from Hegel to Ricoeur engaged with the problem of Other and Otherness (the issue of alterity), they did not develop the appropriate thinking, that is, another or alternative thinking. This situation becomes more complex when contemporary philosophers are faced with the issue of alterity while they also try to develop modern thinking. In the Islamic-Arabic context, there is an additional problem, which arises from equating the terms 'alter-modern' and 'non-occidental'. Meskini points out that those who adopt non-occidental thinking are returning to the past, by formulating a kind of Other that is different from European humanity. However, this is not alertness, in its radical sense.

Meskini believes that the idea of alter-modernity cannot exist outside of modernity, as the thinking of alter-modernity presupposes that the thinking of alterity is only possible inside of modernity itself. This means that there is no outside of modernity, and, therefore, it raises the question whether we can find an exit- strategy from modernity. The concept of an "outside" is like a vortex, which, according to Heidegger, must be conquered by philosophising. However, how can we formulate a question about the other of modernity which is non-occidental, such as an Islamic, African, or Asian modernity, belonging to the Other? All attempts to do so have, so far, simply paralleled the idea of European humanity, as argued by Husserl.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps these have simply indigenised the meaning of Other, as a kind of negative, Other that is still outside of Modernity's questions and problems. Hence, this Other continues to postpone Man's struggle with himself in the name of anti-Western's I-ness<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Fathi Meskini, *AL- Huwiyya w Al-Hurriyya naho Anwaar Jadeda*, 'Identity and Freedom toward new Enlightenment', (Beirut: Jadawel 2011), p. 208.

We are not usually aware that Other is us. [The] "We" embraces all kinds of "otherness", and the "We" cannot exist without the ability to be other (Alterity). This is only because the lack of Otherness leads to a narrow view of the self, a vicious circle of identity in the world.<sup>1</sup>

Basically, we have the ability to be who we are not; however, the meaning of 'alterity' or 'Otherness' needs to be re-examined. Three questions remain: first, why has modernity been slow to formulate a suitable concept of Otherness?; second, how can we clarify post-modern confusion regarding the concept of Other?; and, lastly, why do philosophers, today, raise the question of the possibility of another modernity?

The concept of modernity was formulated to refer to the period in European history from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards. In reality, modern times consist of a series of modernities, which all share a common pre-occupation: to unify the world's peoples. In these modern times, there has been an unprecedented cosmopolitan and universal mode of dwelling in the world, a planetary mode of being united in one humanity.

There have been successive concepts of our mode of being in the world: the world is no longer a sign of God's existence but is merely an object, and human beings are no longer God's creatures, but, rather, subjects. Hence, God is no longer the creator, but has been appointed or replaced by human reason. 'Human' is, therefore, a noun which has become the adjective that indicates the normative criterion for establishing the world as one; humankind is one, and its fate is one, in the horizon of hope that is different from hope in the context of a monotheistic God. For Meskini, modernity is a new mode of unification (*Tawhid*), which is not often historicised, according to this point of view. Thus, he assumes that this notion of unification is based on the meaning of

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<sup>1</sup> Fathi Meskini, *Interviews*, Mominoun without Borders, <http://www.mominoun.com/> (accessed at 13/2/ 2018).

entity/being on a 'plane of transcendence', which is radically deprived from any imminent openness of his unique nature. Therefore, to shake up modernity, this new perception of unification needs to be derailed, in such a way that it critiques such notions as one world, one humanity, one reason, one nation and one identity ... and even oneness itself, which is brought about by transcendence.<sup>1</sup>.

Philosophers, from Hegel to Habermas, have agreed that subjectivity is the universal source of modernity, in the sense that it establishes the meaning of objects and their significance. Meskini adds that a metaphysical event that arises from what Kant called the 'Copernican Revolution', depicts objects as revolving around the ego/subject, as the centre of the world. This contrasts with the view of the ancient philosophers, which considered the Self as simply like a planet that revolves around the transcendent being, God. However, with Nietzsche, came the understanding that what this Copernican Revolution did, was simply to replace the transcendent being or monotheistic God with humanity as a whole. God was dead!

What Kant called the 'Copernican Revolution', was, according to Meskini, only the second wave of a monotheistic revolution that had already upset the relationship between this life and the next, by making the human the centre that all worlds revolve around. The question, then, is what tool was used to achieve these two revolutions?

Meskini assumes that this tool was transcendence, the creation of monotheists who had used it, not only to create the transcendent God, one whose nature and power are wholly independent of the material universe, but also to make Him the source from which all beings derive their meaning. Despite attempts by various philosophers to move away from this perception of the monotheistic

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<sup>1</sup> Meskini, *AL- Huwiyya w Al-Hurriyya naho Anwaar Jadeda*, p. 209.

Millah, modernists have, nevertheless, adopted the delusion of transcendence<sup>1</sup>. Modern transcendence considers subjectivity as the only source of prior possibilities that already govern the relationship between Man, the subject, and other beings, objects and constructions. These latter are derived from the disposition of the human being and his ability, whether expressed in actions or knowledge.

Therefore, Meskini says:

Transcendence, whether a monotheistic God or subjectivity (as prior concepts to build possibilities in the nature of human reason and its mode of relating to the world), is a concept that drives a powerful immanence, which has ontological and ethical sovereignty over other beings, as creatures /objects...

Each modern stance is, firstly, subjective and, then, transcendental. It applies the Copernican Revolution to itself, by always making itself the centre of the world.

Therefore, the criticism of modernity is, basically, that it is not successful, in the sense that it dispenses with transcendence. If we accept this, we can understand that alterity, is not an obsession with Other<sup>2</sup>.

In order to understand how alterity is not otherness, we must, firstly, establish the modern sense of the term, 'otherness': it is the alter ego, which emerges from the shadow of the transcendence of pure ego, by way of intersubjectivity. On the other hand, alterity refers to a self which is non-modern, a self which is located beyond the problem of self, as ego and Other. Alteration is a temporal concept that refers to a new way of thinking about 'ourselves', which dispenses with the transcendental problem that Heidegger struggled to overcome. As Meskini points out:

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 213.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pp. 213-214.

If modern is the grabbing or possessing of the “asmā’u l-ḥusnā”(Beautiful Names) of the monotheistic God, and specially of transcendence, so alter-modernity is the art of renouncing transcendence in order to create freedom [...] We cannot escape the time of Milluh unless we succeed in creating freedom and ruling out the notion of transcendence; indeed, all the meanings of freedom that we have ever known, from the Book of Exodus to ‘Being and Time’, have been silently established on the paradigm of transcendence.<sup>1</sup>

Meskini perceives a difference between ‘Alteration’ and ‘Alterity/Otherness’: while the latter distinguishes between ego and Other, the former is not involved with identity that belongs to the history of self-sameness, but, rather, it belongs to a new lexicon, whose appearance announced the beginning of a new age, one beyond modernity. Alteration refers to our ability to change ourselves, as has always happened during the history of Being. This ability is freedom, the freedom to go beyond one’s knowing, and, therefore, beyond one’s old self.

Philosophers often push the limits of conventional thinking in various ways, and evidence of this can be found in their work. For example, they have created a number of prefixes, such as the Greek “meta” the German “über” and the Latin “alter”, which appear in words like *metà tà physikà*, *Übermensch*, and *alter ego*. In each of these cases, the prefix is a sign of freedom, according to Meskini, in the sense that its multiple modes permits usage to go beyond the limitations of our language. This, according to the first Wittgenstein, is also the limitations of our world. Thus, the concept of alter-modernity is a formulation of freedom in the face of the internal limitations of ourselves. However, the Other is not a person outside of the Self, but, rather, a mode or state that goes beyond the current self<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 215.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p.213.

For Meskini, this alterity/Otherness becomes one who is standing at the boundary of the formal self and urging it to cross to the outside, which we should think of as an unknown language game that we have to create. Alterity/Otherness, which is capable of belonging to space in this strange way, is outside, but this “outside” is located in the inner self, that is ourselves. However, the who-questioning about who We are, does not have a specific ontological burden, in the same way that a pure horizon lacks a definite content. Thus, an alter-modernity must not play by the same rules as a negative Modernity, because the negativity involves a type of vengeance, which we have to be cured of, before we can become positive about ourselves. Furthermore, the alter-modernity must distance itself from conflicts of "recognition", which is a bond forged by transcendence, whether monotheism or modernism. Recognition is related to memory, whereas alteration is related to the process of freeing ourselves through forgetfulness, and especially to that of freeing ourselves from the unforgettable, such as the deepest structures of our narrative identity. In this way, alteration is a state of ceasing the narrative, in the sense of our transcendental culture, which is translated by the nation state into identity schemata.

Alteration is the art of creating a temporal and open Alter. Alter, here, is the temporal Self who is working in a field of pure diversity and has not yet finalised its identical perception of self. This Alter is contemplating returning to its homeland, as a post-modern return, that is, a return that is free from the nostalgia of the past, as was Heidegger’s return to his village. Alter/Other belongs to itself, without title, identity or correspondence with the narrative identity.

The move from modernity to alter-modernity includes moving from a paradigm of subjectivity to a plethora of forms of subjectification, which are without paradigm. It is not possible to achieve a complete understanding of the human being as modern subjectivity (master, I-hood, pure,

transcendental...etc.); this human being is no longer an individual but, rather, is a state or mode of individuation/uniqueness, or, as Al Kindi terms it, '*Tahwee*' (ex-istence)<sup>1</sup>.

Thus, the concepts of ego, person and identity are all elements of the transcendental plane that is related to the ontological unity of our body, by means of reason or the subject. Therefore, the end of modernity is the end of this kind of belongingness to ourselves. The answer to the who-questioning is, now, not self-sameness, as this questioning no longer refers to this I, or other, but, rather, to multiple ways of subjectivisation that are neither unified/monotheistic nor transcendental. Neither is this alter-modernity marginalising groups or individuals, because each periphery is its own reference center.

This alter-modernity moves from the criticism of self-same reason, in general, to establish a new meaning of Self, without a finite identity; therefore, it has no meaning if it still defends either belongingness in the face of another or competition with a different side of belongingness. Alteration is not belongingness; however, nurturing a presentiment of belongingness as such, might lead us to make assumptions about 'who we are', that is, about our dominant sense of belongingness. Modernity appears only to transform belongingness into a legal public identity, but no one can alternate without using his old self in a new way, because the challenge is not in suggesting new alternatives for ourselves, but in devising a new way of treating the old meaning of ourselves, that is, as free and open possibilities rather than enclosed 'identity-caves'. Therefore, alterity does not replace identity, because there is no substitution for identity; there is simply just another identity. In this way, it can be said that alterity has extricated itself from battles of identity-replacement that are linked to identity conflicts<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p.218.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pp. 218-219.

While it might appear that alter-modernity is simply shaping a new horizon of freedom for the human being, who has been developing a post-identity belongingness for himself, Meskini points out that alter-modernity is working in uncharted territory. - We ourselves are this very domain, which provokes, and is provoked by, modernity, but this does not necessarily mean that we have adopted an anti-modernity orientation. We simply have our existence, in which to provoke modernity, in the sense of the ability of a mere meta-animal to live.

There are a number of objections to modernity in contemporary Arab thinking: we are just marginal identities (the periphery of culture ); therefore, we can develop only alter-modernity, because this meaning of We has not experienced modern events, or the fact of Cogito; hence, each event which has happened on another horizon, such as the death of God, and death of Man, etc., has not included us, in the sense that none of these events have touched the core of our relationship with our old selves. In addition, we have structures of self and processes of self-creation that are still functioning well. When comparing the last man, with the last Muslim who has a metaphysically good morale, we may find that the latter is not suffering from problems of nihilism. Moreover, we may find that this Muslim has not been part of the inner context of modernity long enough to resist, so he is forced to take on the status of a martyr, as a sign of his resurrection, and as a way of living in the Hereafter that is neither modern nor historical.

As this new kind of theological objection is based on the separate histories of the East and West, it consists, therefore, of two groups of completely separate ideas, both of which come from the outside. Meskini maintains that even though the event of Cogito did not occur on the Muslim-Arabic horizon, and, so, did not establish its questions in the Arabic language or theoretical lexicon, it did happen on the horizon of human beings, in general, including the Muslim-Arabic context. Therefore, the Death of God does not include the God conceptualised by Islam; it refers



to the Christian God. However, Meskini argues that if this event occurred on the horizon of a monotheistic God, then it happened, also, to the Islamic God, which is part of the history of the monotheistic God.

He agrees that, while it may be true that monotheists were the first to launch the concept of the 'sanctity of human life', they were also the very ones whose culture justified the taking of human life, as a venerable act. In fact, he says that the last Muslim contends that the meaning of alteration is seeking death. However, according to Meskini, there is no such meaning; death does not alter one, as through it, one falls into an instrumental and meagre relationship with life<sup>1</sup>.

Alteration is the art of subjectification without transcendence, and a process of self-creation, not self-destruction. It is also the singular ability of dwelling within lifeforms without identity, in the sense that simply being alive is an authentic status for Alteration. This means, that above all, Alteration resists any form of identity-death.

Therefore, the basic goal of alter-modernity is to successfully move from a culture of identity, which replaces transcendence with an unfavourable alternative that is Narration, characterised by

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<sup>1</sup> It should be mentioned, here, that Meskini is one of the thinkers who was involved in, and defined the Tunisian Revolution that sparked the Arabic Spring, and were subsequently influenced by this event. Therefore, in this context, he points out that the death, or the self-immolation of Tarek al-Tayeb Mohamed Bouazizi, on 17 December 2010, (which became the catalyst for the Tunisian Revolution) was an act beyond identity-death, in the sense that it does not belong either to the narratives of *Millah*, that is, to the hope of an Afterlife, or to modernity, although it involved his facing two ethical formulations - *Millah* and modernity. Bouazizi ignited the fire that consumed his body, which, according to the modern State, was not worthy of continuing to live. It can be said that, tragically, such self-immolation is a patriotic act that is consistent with the modern state's view of the meaning of citizenship. The modern police-state reduces the meaning of homeland to a mere mechanical participation in territory; thus, the burning of one's body is a kind of inverted moral recognition of this view. Clerics may not hesitate to say that burning oneself is, from the religious viewpoint, a sin or an act forbidden by God. Therefore, while Meskini interprets this act as standing beyond, what is considered by *Millah*, as lawful and prohibited, he considers it, at the same time, to be at the heart of the universal conflict between Man and the modern police-state, which deals with human beings as faceless populations, or just physical entities; Bouazizi used his life as the greatest potential alteration in the face of identity. Fathi Meskini and U. B. Meskini, *Al-Thawrat Al-Arabia Seyra ghar thatiyya. Arab Revolutions as Anti-Biography*, (Beirut: Jadawel 2013), p.173, p. 176.

Also, Meskini, *AL- Huwiyya w Al-Hurriyya naho Anwaar Jadedda*, p. 220, pp, 242-243.

the art of freedom. Hence, alteration is the only remaining art of freedom for those who want to develop a mode of self-without-identity.

To sum up, there is a difference between a ‘non-identity self’, that is, the ability of the self to control the obsession with identity, and the ‘abstract-self’, which is an abstract subject or rational animal. Therefore, although the question of who we are has no final answer, it does evoke our ability to critique, including our ability to extract ourselves from any dominant perspective of the self.

## Conclusion

In order to summarise Heidegger's influence on Meskini, it was firstly necessary to examine the problematic of Meskini's indigenisation of Heidegger's concepts. This involved his discussions about how to translate *Being and Time* into Arabic, which culminated with the publication of the translated version, entitled, *الكيونة والزمان*, in 2012. While working on this translation, Meskini encountered a number of obstacles, for while it might seem a simple task to find appropriate translations, in Arabic, of Heidegger's terms, the process, in fact, involved far more than this. It required him to investigate the concept underlying the Arabic translation, in terms of how it had evolved throughout the history of Arabic philosophy. Thus, Meskini admits, the task of translating *Being and Time* was less about translating than it was about philosophising, in the Arabic context, that is, shaking up the language of the Arabic tradition during of the act of translation:

We can understand Heidegger only when we establish the question of the meaning of the language of Being in our own way.<sup>1</sup>

To do this, Meskini had to investigate the fundamental moment in history when monotheistic tradition met Greek philosophy, especially that of Aristotle. This rendez-vous is still considered to be an important historical and philosophical milestone, today. Meskini believes that Heidegger's theses are essential to any attempt to critique Arabic culture. He said:

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<sup>1</sup> Meskini, Interviews, *Qadhaya Islamiya Muasira*, p. 20.

Indeed, Heidegger is very close to us in the sense that Heidegger established a kind of “critique of interpretational reason”, which is a crucial milestone in the linguistic paradigm.<sup>1</sup>

According to Meskini, Man can exist, talk and be aware of himself only through the paradigm of his era, which has always governed him. For the ancient Greeks, this was the paradigm of being so, the best way for them to understand the essence of a thing, that is, it's being, was by identifying its substance or categories. For the Modernists, their paradigm was that of subject. This means that the best way for them to represent something was through its appearance, as perceived by the human mind, as subject. As for contemporary Man, whose paradigm is linguistics, it is by investigating the meaning of being or speech, by analysing or interpreting the hermeneutics of texts and speech, which are produced by him.

Thus, for Meskini, the basic characteristic of contemporary Man is that he is a linguistic being; he is no longer a substance or consciousness, but, in fact, a linguistic entity. At this particular point, he argues that Arabic thinking is a kind of ‘linguistic reason’. This means that Arabic culture has been dwelling in a linguistic paradigm, without being aware of it. The metaphysical effect of this ‘linguistic reason’ can be found, first, in the Mu'allaqat (a pre- Islamic group of seven long Arabic poems), then in the Quran, and, later, in Sufism and philosophy, all of which equate word with Being. In this way, Meskini adopts the philosophical ideas that were formulated by Heidegger, especially that of the meaning of being, to help Arabic culture overcome challenges which prevent it from thinking radically about such issues as meaningfulness, language, understanding, identity of the human being, topology, the world, death and understanding of Time.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.alhayat.com/article/420544/> accessed at 5/09/2019.

Raising the question of the meaning of being, in the Islamic-Arabic context, involves investigating the history of the Arabic concept of *Wujud*, which expresses the Greek terms εἶναι (einaí) and τὸ ὄν (to on). Through such an investigation, Meskini found that there was a way of reconciling the Greek perspective of being with the *Millah* one. The latter believes that beings exist due to a hidden cause. Moreover, during the indigenisation of Aristotle's metaphysics, Arabs were not comfortable with his idea of the Eternity of being. Therefore, through Heidegger's concept of being, we can understand the onto-theological structure of the Arabic lexicon, as it was during the attempt to indigenise the Greek concepts without detracting from the Monotheistic, creation-based ontology.

'Huwa' and Mawjod, are two formulae that avoid of notion of the eternity of the world. The first of these is just a devious attempt to abstract the essence of something. With regard to second, it is a passive participle that obscures the identity of the one who performs the action, especially when it is an action of being or existence, as it refers to unseen actor. This is consistent with the narrative of *Millah* .and is quite different from the meaning of τὸ ὄν (to on), which refers to being - not to the one who performs the action of being, but rather to one who is, by itself.

For Meskini to liberate being from this understanding, he had to reawaken the essential formula of the verb 'to be' (kaan), which refers to an entity standing by itself, without reference to the cause of that entity. In fact, Meskini struggled, in the context of Arabic, firstly to liberate the concept of being /entity, which had already been interpreted and named as '*Mawjod*', in its passive sense.

The term 'Kaen'(being) includes everything we talk about, perceive or think about, before being classified by us as right or wrong, animate or inanimate, concrete or abstract, visible or hidden, or tool or art work. However, 'Kaen' does not reveal itself, but, rather, is revealed by a prior concept, which is 'Kaouna'. This is a gerund of the verb Kan ('to be'), which is found especially in some

writings of Sufism, such as those of Ibn Arabi, where it is used to refer to the First Truth. However, it is a term that has long been neglected by other philosophers. Meskini distinguishes between 'Kaounouna' and 'Kaen' by referring to the former as 'Sein' and the latter as 'seiend'.

Therefore, *Kaounouna* is not just a term that has been neglected in the history of Islamic ontology; it is part of the history of the forgetting of Being, which we have not taken seriously into account, because our language is not our property, but merely one of the experiences of the meaningfulness of humanity. So, the question of being, which is the ultimate question, examines our experiences of meaningfulness, of which one still governs, and has governed for a long time, our understanding of the essence of the human being. Therefore, Meskini, following in Heidegger's footsteps, launches the question about the essence of human being, which Heidegger recognised as lying somewhere between the What-question and the Who-question. All conflicts about thinking that have happened in the contemporary Arabic context since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, have been identity conflicts. Both those who have defended authenticity, which is the traditional position in the face of modernity, and those who adopt the modern position in the face of tradition, believe that they have the definitive answer, concerning the essence of human being, but, in fact, both belong to history of the What-question.

Currently, the critical problem is deciding what is meant by the concept of "*Huwiyya*". There are certain meanings of *Huwiyya*, such as 'identity' and 'subjectivity' that are no longer feasible, or have no substance. Those that remain, refer to people's belongingness, to their deep inner sense of self, which does not have a definitive meaning. It seems that the future is the only worthy content of selfhood.

Thus, we cannot migrate outside ourselves; we are always living somewhat within the horizon of the self. Depicting the future as only those events that have not happened yet, weakens the flection

of what is coming. The future is more than this, because most of what lies in the future, comes to us from the past. However, Meskini contends that Averroes, Al-Farabi, the Qur'an, Mu'allaqat, Arabs, in general, and even Islam are "signs" or a complex linguistic system that still glorifies reason, on the horizon of understanding ourselves. This reflects Heidegger's view that

Thinking does not begin until we have come to know that the reason that has been extolled for centuries is the most stubborn adversary of thinking.<sup>1</sup>

Meskini identifies a problem in interpreting the relationship between our old selves and the new world, whether Western or non-Western : instead of guarding a deep meaning of ourselves, (i.e. Islam or Arab) we must reinvent ourselves, in accordance with the new challenge imposed on us - this challenge of the Western transition from modernity (where our contribution was absent or silent) to beyond Modernity, where we can contribute, consciously and purposefully, to establishing a new linguistic reason, through which humanity will speak in the future.

If the Islamic-Arabic context is considered as "Volk" of language, culture of speech, and civilization of the 'Book', there will be no people more in need of hermeneutics today than the Arabs. The West has distinguished itself from the rest of humanity, by its way of re-reading its spiritual history, and by its reinterpretation of its deep self, in order to invent new forms of existence. The idea of the 'nation', itself, is an interpretive idea, a specific way of drawing up a linguistic and spiritual map, by means of which a 'Volk' can recognize itself, and, then, understand new ways of belongingness, which are alterations of what are considered sources itself. Hermeneutics, today, on the horizons of Arabs and Muslims, is a real possibility for rearranging our deep-seated relationship with ourselves, and charting an appropriate understanding for our new

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Heidegger, "Nietzsche's Word 'God is dead' in Martin Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, transl., Julian Young & Kenneth Haynes, (UK: Cambridge University Press 2002), p. 199.

selves. Therefore, those who refuse to engage in hermeneutical experience of the meaning of themselves are objects, thereby ruling themselves out of the new spiritual history of humanity.



## Appendix

### Fathi Meskini (1961- )

Born in 1961 in Bou Salem, a town and commune in the Jendouba Governorate of Tunisia, Fathi Meskini is a renowned philosopher, translator and poet, who currently holds the post of Professor of Contemporary Philosophy, at Tunis University. He considers himself as part of the generation who tried – under the cloud of a momentous historical event (the first Gulf War in 1990) – to change the direction of philosophy in Tunisia. His contribution to this was to engage with others of his generation, to have philosophical academic writings published in Arabic rather than French, as had been the tradition up until that time.

Tunisian Universities are a part of the French tradition, so, we, too, are part of this tradition, even those who reject it. Nevertheless, some note-worthy progress has been made with the emergence of some form of symbolic resistance to the dominance of this French tradition, by daring to write theses in Arabic, especially those on Western philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

Unlike those who accept the widespread assumption that the task of contemporary Arab philosophers is to work via the translation of the works of their Western counterparts, Meskini points out that theirs is, rather, a dual task. This involves not only translating Western works, but also creating new concepts that reflect the Arabic context. This revolutionary way of thinking, he attributes, in his own case, to the inspiration of Heidegger.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.diwanalarab.com>. Accessed 5/09/2019.

He taught me how to think particularly and universally, at the same time, and his works that reveal his thinking have provided me with the opportunity to experience the possibility of philosophising in Arabic. However, this should be done in a universal way, because there is no more universal question than the meaning of Being.<sup>1</sup>

Meskini is particularly known for his interest in German philosophy. This he attributes to a number of 'mysterious and exciting similarities' that he believes exist between Arabs and Germans: both have difficult languages that have a special authenticity. Also, they are both peoples who have lost their past glory and strict religious beliefs. This, he argues, has enabled them to translate the contents of these beliefs into a strict code of civil ethics. In addition, they both have a deep sense of national identity and pride, which sets them apart from other peoples. Nevertheless, in Meskini's opinion, this has not prevented Germans from developing the greatest universal values in the history of philosophy.

Because of this special interest in German philosophy, Meskini has translated the following works:

1. *Handbuch Deutscher Idealismus* (Handbook of German Idealism) , Hans Jörg Sandkühler (Editor), (with other translators), Beirut, Arab Network for Research and Publishing, 2012.
2. Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason, by Immanuel Kant, Beirut, jadawel, 2012.
3. *On the Genealogy of Morality*, by Friedrich Nietzsche, Tunis, Institut de Traduction de Tunis, 2010.
4. *Being and Time*, by Martin Heidegger, (Beirut : dar alkitab al jaded, 2012).

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

5. *The Theory of Communicative Action*, by Jürgen Habermas (not yet published)

Since 1997, he has published a number of books in Arabic. These deal with a range of subjects, such as Enlightenment, Hermeneutics, identity of the human being, religion, and terrorism. He participated in the Tunisian Revolution of 2011, an event which influenced his thinking, causing him to change many of his concepts. However, by far, the single greatest influence on Meskini's thinking has been the works of Heidegger.

His Published works are:

1. Hegel w Nhayat Al-Metaphziqa, Hegel and the end of metaphysics.
2. *Naqd Al-Aql Al-Ta'wely aw Falsafat Al-Elah Al-Akheer*, Critique of Hermeneutical Reason or philosophy of the last God (Heidegger from fundamental ontology to the History of Being (1919-1944).
3. *Falsafat Al Nwabit* , Philosophy of Migrants.
4. *Al- Cogito Al-Majrooh :As'lat Al-Huwiyya fi Al-falsafa Al-moasera* ,The wounded cogito, Questions of human identity in the contemporary philosophy (Algeria: editions ehkhitlef, 2013).
5. *Al-Huwiyya wa Al-zaman: ta'welat phenomenolgia le moshklat Al-nahn*, Identity and Time : phenomenological hermeneutics of the question of the 'We'. (Beirut: Dar Al-Taliaa, 2001).
6. *AL- Huwiyya wa Al-Hurriyya naho Anwaar Jadedda*, 'Identity and Freedom toward new Enlightenment', (Beirut: Jadawel, 2011).
7. *AL- AL- Faylsof wa Al-Empratoria: Fi Tanwer Al- Ensan Al-Akheer, Philosopher and Empire: into Enlightenment of last Man*, (Morocco, and Centre cultural Arabe, 2005).

8. *Al-Ttafkir ba'd Heidegger aw Kafe Al-Khroj mn Al-Asr Al-Ta'wely lilaqel, Thinking Post Heidegger or How to go forth from the hermeneutical age of Reason*, (Beirut: Jadawel 2012).

9. *Al-Thawrat Al-Arabia Seyra ghar thatiyya, Arab Revolutions as Anti-Biography*, (Beirut: Jadawel, 2013).

10. *Aleman alhor aw ma baad al-mella: mabaheth fi falsfat aldeen, a Free Faith or Post-Millah: Investigations of religion philosophy* (Beirut, mominoun without borders, 2018)

In addition, he has written numerous articles and studies:

1: Modern discussion <http://www.ahewar.org>.

2- Arab and contemporary thinking.

3- Islamic issues.

4- Contemporary Arabic thinking.

5- Mominoun without Borders <http://www.mominoun.com/>.

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